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Shapes of Freedom

*Hegel's Philosophy of World History in
Theological Perspective*



Peter C. Hodgson

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Preface

My interest in Hegel and history goes back many years. In college, I majored in history and submitted a senior thesis on the philosophy of history in the theories of the Levellers and Diggers, radical sects during the Puritan Revolution in seventeenth-century England. A course on nineteenth-century philosophy in which I enrolled was taught by an eccentric visiting professor, who, without any explanation, opened the first day of class by reflecting on the opening sentences to chapter 7 of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "In the configurations hitherto considered—which are distinguished broadly as consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit—religion also, as the consciousness of absolute being in general, has doubtless made its appearance. . . ." He was still lecturing on Hegel in early December; only then, he professed, did he discover that the course was to last one semester rather than two. I understood little of what was going on, but it was fascinating. I learned at this early stage what others already knew, that Hegel possesses a Puck-like capacity to make sober people lose their senses.

I pursued graduate degrees in religion and theology and wrote a doctoral dissertation on the Hegelian theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur. I returned to Hegel again in the 1970s when I began teaching a course on Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century. My interest in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* led to a new edition and translation of that work in the 1980s. In 1989, I published a book, *God in History: Shapes of Freedom*, which represented a breakthrough in my own intellectual journey, but I refer to it only once in the present book. The occasion for the latter is the new edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (2011) that Robert F. Brown and I have prepared, with the assistance of William G. Geuss. This is the first English translation that distinguishes and identifies the sources based on German critical editions. I wanted to write a commentary to follow upon its publication. I have done so from a theological perspective because theology is my own academic discipline and because the place of theology in Hegel's *Weltgeschichte* has not been adequately recognized in earlier studies.

The first chapter offers an introduction to the work by considering the textual sources of the lectures, some of the key categories, and the modes of writing history that Hegel distinguishes. While he regards himself as a “philosophical” historian, he engages with “ordinary” historians and adopts many of their procedures. Philosophy, however, identifies the central theme of world history that gives it meaning: “the progress of the consciousness of freedom”; and it articulates this theme in a threefold structure: synchronic, diachronic, and surchronic. The first two of these structures are examined in Chapter 2. From a synchronic perspective, freedom takes shape through the interweaving of the divine idea and human passions, and such freedom defines the *purpose* of historical events in the midst of apparent chaos. Viewed diachronically, freedom becomes a *process* that unfolds through stages of historical development. Chapters 3 and 4 elaborate these two aspects: the state is the institutional actualization of freedom, and the course of world history is a series of shapes of freedom.

By “surchronic” I mean an intensification of the temporal, a more primordial and infinite temporality, which is what Hegel calls the eternal history of God, a history that provides the depth dimension to purpose and development. World history is the outworking of the eternal history of God. Thus a theological aspect is integral to Hegel’s philosophical world history, and he is quite explicit about it even as he reconstructs the idea of God in temporal/historical categories as the trinitarian becoming of absolute spirit—the “true infinite” that engenders and includes the finite. History manifests the rule of God (“providence”); it functions as the justification of God (“theodicy”); and the end of history can be described as the “kingdom of God.” But the God who rules in and is justified by history is a crucified God who takes the suffering, anguish, and evil of the world into and upon godself, accomplishing reconciliation in the midst of ongoing tragedy and inescapable death. The final chapter addresses these themes in the context of present-day questions about what they mean and whether they still have validity.

I have benefited greatly from the friendship of Robert F. Brown and Robert R. Williams in conceiving and writing this book.

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Citations

Citations are from *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, i. *Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822–3*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson with the assistance of William G. Geuss (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011). Pages 1–63 comprise the editorial introduction; pages 67–521, the text. The following abbreviations are used:

M_{22/28} = manuscript fragment used for the introduction to the lectures of 1822 and 1828 (pages 67–77).

M = manuscript of the introduction written in 1830 (pages 78–126).

Loose Sheets = manuscript loose sheets related to the lectures of 1830–1 (pages 127–30).

L = transcription of the lectures of 1822–3 by K. G. J. von Griesheim and H. G. Hotho (pages 133–521).

The German source for the manuscript materials is *Vorlesungsmanuskripte II (1816–1831)*, ed. Walter Jaeschke, *Gesammelte Werke*, xviii (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1995). The source for the lectures of 1822–3 is *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, Berlin, 1822–1823*, ed. Karl Heinz Ilting, Karl Brehmer, and Hoo Nam Seelmann, *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, xii (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996). The German pagination for both sources is given in the margins of the English edition.

L₃₀₋₁ = transcription of the lectures of 1830–1 by Karl Hegel (original manuscript pages 1–509). This material has not yet been published, but a typescript of the transcription has been made available to the author by Walter Jaeschke. When the transcription is published in German, the manuscript page numbers will be indicated. The English translation will follow in our vol. ii.

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1

Hegel's Philosophy of World History

The Texts of Hegel's Lectures

Texts bear a relationship to ideas similar to that of nature to history and spirit. Without a material soil in texts, ideas cannot take birth, cannot move among human beings across time and space and soar to unimagined heights. Likewise, history requires a material basis and is formed from the interaction of nature and spirit. This interaction, so Hegel argues, generates a distinctive human shape, that of freedom, which struggles against and is often overwhelmed by forces of repression, self-interest, and violence. Freedom cannot be just a human production but is the work of “absolute spirit” or God; free spirit is the ontological matrix that binds together God and history. These extraordinary ideas are the topic of this book.

I start at the beginning, with the texts. For Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, what sort of texts are they?¹ Most of them are transcriptions made by students or auditors of lectures delivered by Hegel on five different occasions between 1822 and 1831. These transcriptions differ in quality, but none of them is a verbatim record of what Hegel said. What Hegel said could, of course, be only imperfectly captured by the technology of his time.

In addition, several sets of manuscript materials written by Hegel himself have survived. One of these consists of a partial manuscript used for the introduction to the lectures in 1822 and 1828, the two occasions when Hegel began his presentation by discussing the types or varieties of

¹ Detailed information on the texts is found in the Editorial Introduction to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson, with the assistance of William G. Geuss (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011), 1–10.

historiography: "original history," "reflective history," and "philosophical history." In the surviving fragments only original history and a portion of reflective history are covered. Another set of materials is formed by several pages of "loose sheets" composed in 1830 and related to the last lectures, those of 1830–I.

The most important of these materials is one of the most valuable possessions that we have from Hegel's own hand. It consists of approximately forty-six double-sided sheets of a manuscript for the introduction to the lectures of 1830–I. The material has been carefully prepared and evidences a great deal of editing and revision, so that it almost has the quality of a fair copy intended for publication. The evidence suggests that Hegel's original intention was to devote the entirety of the 1830–I lectures to introductory and conceptual matters, elaborating the concept of the philosophy of a world history much more fully than on previous occasions. This manuscript is the beginning of his attempt to do so. However, for various reasons he was unable to follow through with this plan and he again lectured on the whole of the *Weltgeschichte*. The time for preparation was short and Hegel had both administrative duties and other publication projects. Thus the introduction as actually delivered in 1830 differs in significant ways from what is written in the manuscript. We know from transcriptions of the last series of lectures that it follows the manuscript most closely at the beginning, but then introduces numerous shorter or longer passages that draw upon earlier preparatory materials for which there are no extant manuscripts. At other places the manuscript has passages that are not used for the lectures at all, and passages that differ from parallels in the lectures. In the final section, "on the course of world history," the manuscript and the lectures diverge completely.² Thus the manuscript takes on an independent status quite apart from the actual lectures, and in terms of literary quality and detailed treatment it is superior to any transcription. It brilliantly displays the dialectical skill and subtle nuances of Hegel's thinking.³

² For details on the comparison between manuscript and lectures, see Walter Jaeschke, "Das Geschriebene und das Gesprochene: Wilhelm und Karl Hegel über den Begriff der Philosophie der Weltgeschichte," *Hegel-Studien*, 44 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2009), 13–44. Jaeschke believes it is possible that the main source for the actual lectures was not the extant manuscript but other, now lost materials.

³ The manuscript materials have been published in *Vorlesungsmanuskripte II (1816–1831)*, ed. Walter Jaeschke, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1995), xviii. 121–207.

For the most part, however, we must rely on the transcriptions. The best of these were prepared for the first course of lectures, those of the winter semester of 1822–3, by K. G. J. von Griesheim and H. G. Hotho. Griesheim and Hotho were among the most reliable of Hegel's transcribers, and they recorded his lectures on various topics in the mid-1820s. When their efforts are combined into a single "integral" text, as they have been by the editors of the German edition utilized for our translation, the result is a detailed and readable text that approximates as closely as possible to what Hegel actually said.⁴ These lectures have several notable features, among them being the richest philosophical treatment in any of the lectures of the concept of the philosophy of world history, the detailed attention given to the Oriental World (comprising nearly half the volume following the introduction), and the systematic anchoring of geography in the topic of the state as one of its essential features.

Hegel repeated the lectures in the winter semesters of 1824–5, 1826–7, 1828–9, and 1830–1, and for each of these courses transcriptions are available, which produces an enormous amount of material, only some of which can be published. According to the philosopher's son, Karl Hegel, who transcribed the last series, Hegel's tendency in the later lectures was to reduce the philosophical and abstract aspects, expand the historical material, and popularize the whole.⁵ The manuscript of 1830 was the beginning of an attempt to reverse that tendency. Karl Hegel's transcription of the lectures of 1830–1 will eventually be published in German, along with selections from intervening years. When they appear, they will be translated in a second volume of the English edition. In the meantime a typescript by Walter Jaeschke of the K. Hegel transcription has been made available to me. Robert Brown has prepared a draft translation, and references to these lectures in the following chapters are based on K. Hegel's manuscript pages.

⁴ The text runs to 521 pages in the German edn. The editors have also drawn on a partial transcription by F. C. H. V. von Kehler. For details on their methods, see *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte (Berlin 1822/1823)*, ed. Karl Heinz Ilting, Karl Brehmer, and Hoo Nam Seelmann, *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), xii. pp. vii–x, 527–36.

⁵ See Karl Hegel's Preface to the 2nd German edn. of 1840, trans. John Sibree in 1857 as *The Philosophy of History*, with a new introduction by C. J. Friedrich (New York: Dover, 1956), pp. xi–xii.

The distinctive feature of the new editions in German and English—and of this book, which is based on them—is that the various sources have been distinguished and published as independent units. In all the earlier editions, the sources were amalgamated into a unitary, editorially constructed text, which destroyed the integrity of the original documents and the context for Hegel's ideas. A confusing textual history has emerged, but this is the salient point about all the previous editions.⁶ The sources available for the present book are: the manuscript fragment of the introduction used in 1822 and 1828, the manuscript of the introduction written in 1830, the “loose sheets” related to the lectures of 1830–1, the transcription of the lectures of 1822–3 by Griesheim and Hotho—all published in the new edition of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*; and a transcription of the lectures of 1830–1 by K. Hegel.⁷ Our task is made more difficult but also enriched by the new edition. It is more difficult because we have to honor the multiplicity of sources; but it is enriched because we can identify the sources, recognize the context of Hegel's thoughts, and appreciate how these thoughts were nuanced over the years. Hegel's concept of world history did not change in significant ways, but he was always experimenting with organization and emphasis, and with conceptual and metaphorical articulation.

Indeed, it is the experimental character of the lectures that makes them so appealing. We follow a thinker at work on the podium. Thinking is articulated by words, and the words are written down by auditors, whose own selection of what they hear and remember is a factor. Nearly two centuries later, we publish the transcriptions and manuscripts in a critical edition and begin the process of thinking with Hegel anew, in our own time and place. The ideas come alive again: they begin to move and soar; they assume new shapes; they require reflection, criticism, and correction. As earlier interpreters have noted, the more basic problems with Hegel's work are not textual but philosophical.⁸ What are we to make of his

⁶ See *Lectures*, 6–10. The Lasson edition of 1917 provided a partial correction by identifying the manuscript materials, but it conflated the transcriptions.

⁷ The default sources are the manuscript of 1830 (M) and the transcription of the lectures of 1822–3 (L), with additional materials from the manuscript fragment of 1822/8 (M_{22/28}), the Loose Sheets, and the transcription of the lectures of 1830–1 (L_{30–1}).

⁸ See George Dennis O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 6; and Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 18.

astonishing claim that reason (and with it God) is the power, substance, content, and end of world history, and that history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom—while at the same time history is acknowledged to be a field of violence and evil, a “slaughterhouse”? What are we to make of the astonishing range and detail of Hegel’s knowledge of world history, while recognizing his early nineteenth-century Eurocentric bias? Is the project of a philosophy of *world* history ever really possible? Do its inevitable limitations ruin the prospect of thinking globally about the meaning of our own lives and our own history? Is not every individual action related to an infinite context of interactions? Has this not become clearer in an age of instant global connection and communication, so that ironically world history is more essential than ever but all the more difficult to achieve?

Hegel’s lectures on world history were popular among students because they were related to everything else he thought about. Prior to 1822–3, he treated world history in the context of his work on the philosophy of right, where it comprised the third and final section of his discussion of the state, which in turn was a subcategory of one of the forms of “objective spirit,” namely ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*).⁹ In this respect, world history seems to play a small but significant role in Hegel’s system of philosophy, as principally a history of states and as a transition from objective spirit to absolute spirit. Objective spirit finds its *completion* in the shapes of absolute spirit, and the latter find their *concrete configurations* in the ethical life of states; the point of conjunction is world history. When this topic is elaborated in lectures, it becomes clear that the conjunction does in fact provide another opening to the whole because “history” permeates every human activity, including not only the various topics of the philosophy of right (law, morality, ethical-political life) but also the philosophies of spirit, art, religion, and philosophy itself. All these topics are addressed in the *Weltgeschichte*, both in the introduction and in the detailed treatment of the cultural worlds that constitute the course of world history. But they are also independent topics, warranting their own integral treatment. So world history is both part of a larger whole and the whole itself viewed in terms of the history of freedom; freedom is the distinctive quality (or shape) of spirit in the world

⁹ See *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); §§ 341–60 are on world history. These paragraphs are highly condensed and require elaboration to become intelligible.

and the distinctive topic of *Weltgeschichte*. The history of freedom is a topic in its own right in Hegel's system and has a proper place alongside the other partial histories of spirit (art, religion, and philosophy).

The question may remain as to why Hegel decided to lecture on the philosophy of world history at all, and what its function is in the larger framework of his system. Any number of specific topics in the philosophy of right could have been given extended treatment. But history has special importance in light of the historicity of Hegel's own thought, and questions about history were being raised in contemporary debates that he desired to address. Hegel was also compiling an enormous quantity of historical material, especially on Asian culture and religion, but also on Greek, Roman, and European history, for which he sought an outlet.¹⁰ History is neither a final form of the system, nor an appendix, nor something extra-systematic, nor a popular introduction. It is the whole viewed through the lens of the progress of the consciousness of freedom, which is as integral to becoming fully human as are art, religion, and philosophy.

Spirit, Shape, Freedom, History—and “God”

This study unfolds through the use of five principal concepts or categories: spirit, shape, freedom, history, and God. As an introduction to what follows, a brief elaboration of them is offered here. They are interrelated and to some degree reciprocally defining. The final category, that of “God,” could be placed in quotation marks at the outset because Hegel reconstructs it in ways that must be understood. The word “God” (“the absolute,” “the idea,” “absolute spirit,” “being in and for itself,” “the true infinite”) occurs frequently in the text, but its meaning requires clarification. I shall seek a resolution in the final chapter.

I start with the word *spirit* (*Geist*). “World history,” Hegel tells us, “is the rational and necessary course of world spirit. World spirit is spirit as such, the substance of history, the one spirit whose nature [is] one and the same and that explicates its nature in the existence of the world” (M 80–1). “Spirit” is found on several levels, that of the individual human being

¹⁰ The philosophy of history lectures of 1822–3 were the first in which this material was elaborated. Later it was utilized with differing emphases in lectures on the philosophy of religion and art.

(*Geist*), that of the spirit of a people or nation or state (*Volksgeist*), that of world spirit (*Weltgeist*), and that of absolute spirit (*absoluter Geist*).¹¹ Spirit is thus a fluid, multilevel concept for Hegel, one that expresses the distinctive quality of beings that are conscious, rational, self-reflective, relational. Being is both human and divine, finite and infinite. God is not *a* being, one being among others, but the being of beings, the ontological ground of all beings. However, this ground is of such a nature that it requires actualization in the “thick” community of human ethical life because God (the triune God) is absolute intersubjectivity. God is subject as well as substance, and the divine nature “explicates” itself in concrete existence in the world in a multiplicity of concrete shapes. This explication is what Hegel calls “world spirit.” *Weltgeist* is simply *absoluter Geist* not in and for itself, in its conceptual self-relations, but as present and active in the world. I am getting ahead of myself here and have made statements that can be defended only later.

The principal point at the moment is that *Geist* always requires *Gestalt* (“shape,” “figure”) and that the distinctive *Gestalt* of *Geist* is *Freiheit*. The concept of *Gestalt* appears early in Hegel’s philosophy. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* he describes the stages through which consciousness must pass as *Gestalten des Bewußtseins*, “shapes of consciousness.”¹² A “shape” or “configuration” (*Gestaltung*) is what appears in the world as a structure or form, something with spatial and temporal specificity. In the historical world it is something “sculpted”¹³ out of available resources by human thought and action; it is the *determinacy* that is peculiar to history; it is what makes history distinct from logic and nature but also related to them. It is a historical existence that is not an atomic unit but a doubled or multiple unity, an “individual totality” or an organism. The German word *Gestalt* signifies the arranging or “placing together” (*ge-stellen*) in a pattern or figure of the disparate elements of an appearing thing, a phenomenon. In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel says that because the *determinations* of the concept are essentially the “idea” and thus take on the form of “existence” (*Dasein*), they appear as a “series of shapes” in history.¹⁴

¹¹ See the Editorial Introduction to the *Lectures*, 13 n. 26.

¹² *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952), 74–5.

¹³ Our word “shape” derives via the Anglo-Saxon *sceap* from an Indo-European root, meaning to cut with a sharp tool, to carve or sculpt.

¹⁴ See *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 32 (pp. 60–2). On the concept of “shape” or *Gestalt*, see my earlier book, *God in History: Shapes of Freedom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989),

These shapes are *shapes of freedom*. Hegel employs this expression in describing the philosophical approach to world history: "Unfamiliarity with conceptions concerning the self-developing shape of freedom (*sich entwickelnden Gestaltens der Freiheit*) is partly responsible for the objections to a philosophical consideration of a science [history] that usually confines itself to empirical matters—objections to its so-called *a priori character* and its importation of ideas into the [historical] material" (M 119). A prior familiarity with principles by which history and its empirical data are evaluated is necessary if such an evaluation is to occur at all. Among these principles is "the self-developing shape of freedom," and this phrase is a way of characterizing the course of world history as a whole. That the shape is "self-developing" means that it possesses an interior teleology and is not simply dependent on the external contingencies of history.

In the passage quoted above, the word "shape" is used in the singular, but more commonly Hegel speaks of "shapes" because history is inexhaustibly progressive and plural in its manifestations. The idea that "guides" history must be considered in the element of human spirit or as the idea of human freedom. "Freedom is simply the way in which the idea brings itself forth, becoming what it is for the first time in accord with its concept. This bringing forth is displayed in a series of ethical shapes (*eine Reihe sittlicher Gestalten*) whose sequence constitutes the course of history" (L 146).

Hegel explains that the concept of shapes in history differs from that of species in nature. Nature on his view comprises an unchanging hierarchy of levels, whereas spirit is always pressing toward a new stage.

The sphere of spirit differs from the mode of nature because the ladder of stages that spirit climbs and the labor needed to grasp its concept make it clear that the concept drives itself forward through the sublation and reworking of the previous, lower stage. . . . The existence of a new shape that is the transfiguration of the lower, previous principle demonstrates that the series of spiritual shapes comes about in time. (L 156)

83–4, 206–7. Under the influence of Goethe, Hegel introduced the category of *Gestalt* into his philosophy of nature, meaning by it a physical structure that occurs as a "total individuality," and that appears among living things as an "animal organism." Later he applied it to his theory of consciousness, which, like history itself, expresses a logical structure but finds its basis in nature. See *Philosophy of Nature* (part 2 of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*), trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), §§ 130, 353–6 (pp. 160–78, 357–80).

The “diverse shapes” that “we see in world history as a succession in time we also see standing perennially alongside each other in space” (L 156–7). In space the shapes stand alongside each other “indifferently,” which means that they are not connected in a meaningful series but have an independent necessity. However, many shapes have passed away and no longer have a spatial existence, so any discussion of shapes must attend to the specificities of world history. For example, the spirit of ancient Greece has passed away, whereas China continues to have a static spatial existence. The rebirth of ancient civilizations, especially in Asia, does not seem to be a possibility that Hegel envisioned.

The ethical shapes that constitute the course of history are, as Hegel indicates, shapes of freedom. This is true despite the fact that in ancient civilizations freedom is suppressed and limited in various ways. It is only in the modern European world that freedom comes fully into its own. But freedom is present from the beginning. Wherever the ethical life appears that makes human history possible, freedom is present. Freedom is simply intrinsic to humanity, but a struggle is required to bring it to consciousness, and a continuing struggle is needed to prevent it from being overwhelmed by other forces. The progress of freedom requires a “long and arduous” labor on the part of spirit (M 88). What freedom (*Freiheit*) actually is—a being-present-to-self-in-and-through-another—will be discussed in due course. For Hegel, it is an essentially social phenomenon, not individual free will (*Willkür*).

Thus far, I have touched on the concepts of *spirit*, *shape*, and *freedom*. I have said nothing of *history* and very little of *God*. I turn shortly to some of Hegel's specifications on the word “history.” Perhaps it is helpful at this point to note that for Hegel there is only *one* history, the history of spirit, ranging from absolute spirit to world spirit to folk spirit to individual spirits. There is no separable “salvation history,” a history that is distinct from world history. If salvation or reconciliation occurs, it does so in world history. Hegel does indeed refer to “the absolute history” of God (L 167), or to the “eternal divine history.”¹⁵ The so-called “immanent Trinity” is not properly the divine history, however, but only the eternal point of departure for the divine history. The latter unfolds in the “economic” or “worldly Trinity,” the process of God's being-within-self, externalization

¹⁵ See *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson et al., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), iii. 186–7, 327–8.

or going out from self into appearance, and return from appearance into an enriched "spiritual" unity. A dynamic process is already implicit in the immanent Trinity as God's pretemporal, strictly logical self-relations, but this process becomes historical only in the worldly Trinity through a narrative in which God takes on human flesh, suffers and dies, and is raised into the community of spirit. This history of absolute spirit develops itself in the partial histories of art, religion, philosophy, and freedom, which are the principal shapes of spirit in time (each divided into many sub-shapes). These are all topics of the philosophy of world history, and in this sense it is appropriate to say that Hegel's entire system after the logic is a philosophy of history (not just a few paragraphs at the end of objective spirit).¹⁶ Even the logic is proto-historical because of its inner dynamism; and the "eternal divine history" (the worldly Trinity) is the ground of human history.

But surely this is not the sort of "history" with which historians are concerned. Hegel was the last great systematic philosopher of history because the undertaking itself was challenged by the breakdown of a consensus about the proper tasks of philosophy and the proper methods of history. Burleigh Taylor Wilkins observes that after Hegel's death

Marxists have demanded that philosophy cease trying to understand the world and undertake instead to change it; some pragmatists and existentialists have demanded that philosophy be more responsive to the needs of the individual; and positivists and some ordinary-language philosophers have demanded that philosophers leave off theorizing about phenomena in the world and do conceptual analysis, either of the concepts of science or those of ordinary language.¹⁷

As for the historians, they have insisted that history must be studied without presuppositions and with sole attention to the empirical data. Any organizing theses must be strictly humanistic or social-scientific. Hegel was aware of such attitudes in his own time and responded to them.

One further point needs to be registered as part of this preliminary discussion of history and God. Hegel himself did not regard the partial

¹⁶ See Walter Jaeschke, "World History and the History of the Absolute Spirit," in *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 101–15, esp. 103, 106–10. Since logic is implicitly spirit, and nature is spirit that has externalized itself, they too can be regarded as "historical." However, "natural history" is entirely different from the history of spirit, and logic is a process of purely conceptual relations in which "becoming" (*Werden*) anticipates *historia*. World history is properly the history of spirit.

¹⁷ Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, 16.

histories of art, religion, and philosophy to be successive, such that now both art and religion have been left behind and the present age is that of the philosophy of the absolute self-knowing of humanity and the death of God. The shapes of freedom do not progress in this way but rather as fuller actualizations of absolute spirit, which dies to abstract transcendence and is reborn as the tragic, suffering God.¹⁸ But the former interpretation is adduced by most Hegel scholars today, who can make little sense of Hegel's metaphysical or ontotheological perspective.¹⁹ While this perspective, though clearly present, does not predominate in Hegel's philosophy of world history, and while much of the text can be appreciated apart from it, my argument is that without it less sense can be made of the work as a whole, which is required to stand without its foundational conviction. I do not use the term "ontotheology" in a pejorative sense but simply to describe the kind of theology that makes ontological claims. The divine being for Hegel is not a supreme being or large entity but rather spirit itself, which is intrinsically relational, fluid, world-constituting, and world-embracing. It is a "non-foundational foundation."²⁰

Modes of Writing History

Narrative and Event

Hegel began his lectures in 1822 and 1828 with a discussion of three varieties or types of historical writing. This discussion is not found at the beginning of the lectures in other years, when he seems to have assumed the distinction and started directly with the general concept of world history (which is similar in content to the third of the types, philosophical world history). The manuscript fragments that we possess for 1822 and 1828 were actually written in 1828 but were copied from an earlier (and now lost) notebook, which served as a prototype for the preparation of the notes for 1828–9. Nonetheless, the manuscript agrees in content with the

¹⁸ See Jaeschke, 109–10, 112; and Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press).

¹⁹ See e.g. Oscar Daniel Brauer, *Dialektik der Zeit: Untersuchungen zu Hegel's Metaphysik der Weltgeschichte* (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1982), 167–71. Frederick Beiser, Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin, Charles Taylor, and others hold similar views, which are discussed in Williams's book.

²⁰ See below, p. 155.

beginning of the lectures of 1822–3, except for marginal additions. It covers only the first two types of historiography, original and reflective history. For the full treatment, we must rely on the transcription of the lectures of 1822–3.

Before turning to this discussion, however, we should attend to another distinction that Hegel makes in all the lecture series and that is fundamental to the question of what “history” is. In 1822/8 he writes that historians “transposed things that merely *happened* and existed externally *into the realm of intellectual representation* and elaborated them *in its terms*. First, [there was] something *existent*—now something intellectual and representational.” In a marginal notation he distinguishes between “*historia*” and “*res gesta*”: “the objective history proper of a people begins for the first time when they have a historical record” (M_{22/28} 67–8 incl. n. 5). The distinction is elaborated in the manuscript of 1830:

In our language the word ‘history’ (*Geschichte*) combines both objective and subjective aspects and signifies the *historia rerum gestarum* as well as the *res gestae* themselves, the historical narrative (*Geschichtserzählung*) as well as the events (*Geschehene*), deeds, and happenings themselves—aspects that in the strict sense are quite distinct. This conjunction of the two meanings should be recognized as of a higher order than that of external contingency: we must assume that historical narrative appears simultaneously with the actual deeds and events of history, that they are set in motion together from an inner common foundation. (M 115; see also L 133, 214)

In the strict sense, the two aspects are “quite distinct.” “History” is both things that are done and the accounts of things that are done. But the distinction, once it is made, is also qualified. What happened and existed externally must be transposed into the realm of “intellectual representation” (*geistige Vorstellung*) and indeed must be elaborated in its terms. The elaboration takes the form of a story, a narrative, an ordering of remembered events into a meaningful sequential pattern; otherwise we have only random facts, not *historia*. There is indeed an empirical substratum to history, but it must be *represented*, and when it is represented it is transformed. The distinction seems to be a logical rather than a temporal one: as soon as the actual deeds and events of history appear, so too do historical narratives. The “inner common foundation” by which they are set in motion is simply humanity itself, the spirit of a people. This point is underscored by a remark made about the Hindus. Hegel says that a people must be able to look upon its past in historical terms in order to dispel

caprice and contingency and to establish a secure self-consciousness. He doubts that the Hindus have succeeded in doing this, and so he writes: "Because the Hindus have no history in the subjective sense, they also have none in the objective sense. Precisely because the Hindus have no *historia*, they have no authentic history" (L 286–7). Such a statement reflects prejudice on Hegel's part about the Hindus, but the main point is that objective history (*res gestae*) is dependent on subjective history (*historia*). This could be regarded as part of Hegel's attack on the myth of the historically given, the notion that data are immediately available, prior to and apart from our cognitive faculties.²¹ I return to this matter in the discussion of philosophical world history.

The logical distinction between event and narrative is nonetheless important. Historical narrative is not fictional narrative. It is about things that are done (*res gestae*) rather than things that are imagined in the mind. For history the factual referent is essential, whereas for fiction the referent, though often enough "real," is imaginary. The narrative structures of history and fiction are frequently quite similar, but readers are aware of the difference between fact and fiction. Facts happen in a fleeting instant, and, except for the instant itself, they are remembered rather than directly experienced. Memory already entails a certain type of consciousness, but it is not yet narrative, which builds upon remembered facts and constructs an account.²²

Hegel was writing in an age when there was very little knowledge of "prehistory," that is, of the many millennia when human beings lived and left behind cultural artifacts but no written records. Through archeological research our knowledge of this period has expanded exponentially and to the point where it is common to talk about the history of early human cultures. But Hegel would not have regarded such knowledge to be "history," which for him must be an intentional human production.

Original History

The three modes of writing history are *original history*, *reflective history*, and *philosophical history*. Why Hegel draws these distinctions, and what he means by them, becomes clear only from a close reading of the texts. He

²¹ See Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, 20–4.

²² See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, tr. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988), pts. 2–3.

did not sufficiently clarify his systematic intention, nor did he explain the connection between four subdivisions of reflective history. But they all represent different modalities of the underlying distinction between events and narratives, happenings and historians.

According to Hoo Nam Seelmann, Hegel had four systematic intentions when he prepared this material in 1822 and 1828. First, he did not start with the philosophical concept of the subject at hand, as he did in the other three lecture series, but with the representations of it in the developing self-consciousness of humanity. The first two modes are thus a phenomenology of history writing. Second, Hegel is distinguishing between three disciplines: the writing of history (original history), the science of history (reflective history), and the philosophy of history. Third, the philosophy of history is shown to be a higher form of reflection, but it does not downplay the independence and accomplishment of the first two modes, which are in fact incorporated into it. Fourth, a systematic logical structure underlies the three modes: an original or immediate unity (between event and interpreter); separation and critical reflection; and reestablished unity on a higher, mediated level. Seelmann notes that this is the principal structure of Hegel's philosophical thinking as a whole.²³

The term "original history" (*ursprüngliche Geschichte*) has a twofold meaning: it refers both to the origin of history writing itself, which Hegel locates principally in Greece, and to the logical structure of original or immediate unity. Original history is written by historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides who have themselves witnessed, experienced, and lived through some of the events they describe. They transpose things that merely happened and existed externally (*res gestae*) into the realm of intellectual representation by constructing narrative and poetic accounts (*historia*). It is the *historian* who does this, who fashions a whole out of fleeting instants, thereby investing what has passed away with immortality, giving it "a more exalted and better soil than that transient soil in which it grew." Original historians do this, however, only with events that for the most part are contemporaneous with them and that belong to their own world, the world in which they themselves are participants, leaders, authors. The speeches they compose express ideas with which they are

²³ Hoo Nam Seelmann, "Weltgeschichte als Idee der menschlichen Freiheit: Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie in der Vorlesung von 1822/23" (doctoral dissertation, University of Saarland, Saarbrücken, 1986), 8–9.

familiar, so that they can fairly represent the speakers' intentions. Such historians are immersed in the materials and do not rise above them to reflect on them. They persist in the mode of immediacy and do not think about what they actually have accomplished by transposing things into representations. They have written the "bibles," the founding documents, of their peoples, and through them the material comes to us, fresh and alive. They offer the not-quite raw materials with which historiography starts its work. Writing in the mode of immediacy is found not just in ancient Greece but throughout history in the form of commentaries, chronicles, and memoirs.²⁴ In fact, the writing of history stretches back for more than four millennia to the historical records of ancient China, which were kept with great precision and with respect to which we can consider both the *res gestae* and what is here called the *narratio rerum gestarum* (L 213–15). Today newspapers and the internet provide a form of original history.

Reflective History

Reflective history (*reflektierende Geschichte*) goes beyond what is present simply to the author; it depicts what is present not only in time but also in the life of *spirit*. It includes everything written by those whom we customarily call historians. The author comes to the material with his own spirit, which is likely to be different from the spirit of the content itself; and everything depends on the maxims and representational principles that the author applies to the content and to the style of his writing (M22/28 71–2). Now the events are not simply narrated but are also reflected in the mind and spirit of the historian. Such reflection is a subjective process that does not yet attain to the true objectivity of history itself.

Hegel distinguishes between four types of reflective history: universal, pragmatic, critical, and specialized (or abstractive). Why these categories are chosen and how they are related remains something of a mystery. Only the first, universal history, is discussed fully in the manuscript of 1822/8, which breaks off shortly after beginning the topic of pragmatic history.

²⁴ M22/28 67–71. The same material is found in slightly different form in L 133–6. The two sets of passages offer an instructive comparison between manuscript and transcription. On original history, see also Seelmann, "Weltgeschichte," 10; and Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, 28–30.

For the remaining types we must rely on the transcription of the lectures of 1822–3.

Universal history (M_{22/28} 72–5) is closest to original history but also distinguished from it. It consists of *surveys* of a people or country or even the world as a whole, which are *compilations* from the accounts of original historians and other sources. When the reflective historian attempts to depict the spirit of the age about which he writes, often with vividness and detail, it is usually his own spirit that is heard, and the details take on a formulaic quality. Hegel compares an original historian such as Polybius with a compiler such as Livy. No more than a Livy can we transpose ourselves completely and vividly into the times of the past; so, for example, as much as we admire Greece and find its life congenial, we cannot truly sympathize with the Greeks or share their feelings. As an example of a historian who endeavors to compile individual traits and to portray them in a faithful and lifelike manner, Hegel introduced a reference to Leopold von Ranke (M_{22/28} 75 n. 25) when he revised his notes in 1828. He does not have a high opinion of Ranke, who in his view offers an assortment of details of little interest, with little or no reference to political concerns and general purposes.²⁵

Pragmatic historiography (L 137–9, cf. M_{22/28} 76–7) arises because whenever spirit addresses the distant and reflected world of the past it finds itself in need of present satisfaction. Pragmatic reflections are a way of enlivening the past and of bringing it into the present in the form of moral instruction. However, “the worst kind of pragmatic historian is one who takes up moral questions as an amateur psychologist.” Such questions and the illustration of moral principles are often regarded as the essential purpose of the study of history. “But the fate of peoples and the overthrow of states occur on a different plane than that of morality, a higher and broader one.” The character of each age is unique. Thus, “history and experience teach that peoples generally have not learned from history. Each people lives in such particular circumstances that decisions must be and are made with respect to them, and only a great figure knows how to find the right course in these circumstances” (L 138). In this respect, pragmatic history is misleading. In another respect, however, pragmatism can be what Hegel calls a rational history (*verständige Geschichte*), which

²⁵ Later Ranke became an influential critic of Hegel's philosophy of history. On Ranke, see further below, pp. 18–20.

focuses not on the external aspect of events but on their continuity and purpose. It describes a rational totality of interests such as a state, a constitution, or a conflict. Here the historian reflects on how a people becomes a state, what the ends of a state are, what institutions are needed to bring true interests to actuality, and what sort of necessity is at work in history, a necessity based on the thing (*die Sache*) that history is about. Hegel says that this kind of pragmatic history is what historians in general have to offer.²⁶ However, the method used by such historians is based on the understanding (*Verstand*), which cannot properly grasp the inner *Sache* of history but remains with surface descriptions and subjective explanations.

Critical history (L 139) is concerned with the history of the writing of history and the critical evaluation of historical narratives. Barthold Georg Niebuhr's *Römische Geschichte* offers an example of what can be accomplished by such an approach, as do French historians. But most of the higher criticism that predominated among the German historians of Hegel's day has "abandoned the soil of history" and replaced it with "the most arbitrary representations, digressions, fantasies, and combinations." It is not clear who Hegel has in mind with this critique other than Niebuhr, but nonetheless critical history represents another step in the progression of reflective history.

Finally, there is an *abstractive* or *specialized* history (L 139–40) that forms a transition to philosophical world history. Why it does so is not sufficiently explained. Hegel calls it "a special history within a universal outlook," and offers as examples the histories of art, science, government, law, and navigation. These are written on specific topics and offer a wealth of details, but they make sense only in connection with the state as a whole or history as a whole, which may or may not be clearly exhibited in the special history.

When the subtypes of reflective history are seen to reenact original history and to anticipate philosophical history, we may begin to gain some sense of what Hegel is about. George Dennis O'Brien offers the following intriguing interpretation.²⁷ Pragmatic history, with its interest in present consciousness, returns to original history in a more complex guise and at an

²⁶ The positive aspect of pragmatism is elaborated only in the manuscript (M22/28 76–7), not in the lecture transcriptions.

²⁷ O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History*, 16–26. O'Brien's interpretation makes sense to me because it shows how the four types of reflective history are related to a larger dialectical structure.

ideal level. What has been accomplished by the swing from objective expansion in universal history to subjective contraction in pragmatic history is that the two poles—the events themselves and the narration of historians—that were naively merged in original history have now been brought to consciousness but remain unresolved. This constitutes a first triplet: *original-universal-pragmatic*. Then a second triplet comes into play: *critical-abstractive-philosophical*. It exploits the understanding's awareness of the problem of history in order to gain historical and philosophical results. The critical historian wrests results from narrations rather than events; the account is material evidence and itself becomes an event. Now ideational materials (the products of spirit) are the primary subject matter. The problem with critical history is that it can become merely subjective and is open to the fancies of the historian or his academic whims. So a broadening is needed from the ideological perspective of a single investigator to an investigation of the general history of ideas. This occurs first in the specialized histories of specific themes in the history of a people, such as the history of art and the history of science. But it reaches its completion only when the "whole internal nexus" becomes the topic of investigation. This is the work of philosophical world history. Its perspective is that of *Vernunft* (reason) as opposed to *Verstand* (understanding), which is the operative mode of pragmatism, and indeed of reflection as a whole. Understanding cannot conceive how distinct entities are merged into a living unity without destroying the distinction; it cannot grasp identity and difference, part and whole, finite and infinite, particular and universal, subjective and objective. The grasping of identity and difference is the insight of speculative reason, which attains not a single but a double mirroring ("mirror" in Latin is *speculum*): the mirroring of consciousness by the objects, and the mirroring of the objects by consciousness.

Hegel's brief references to his contemporaries Niebuhr (1776–1831) and Ranke (1795–1886) provide a good illustration of both his appreciation for and critique of reflective history. When the young Ranke arrived at the University of Berlin in 1825 he joined the so-called "historical school" on the faculty, which was associated with Niebuhr, F. C. von Savigny, J. G. Eichhorn, and Friedrich Schleiermacher, whereas Hegel was at the center of the "philosophical school." Between these two factions there was tension, to say the least, heightened by the historical school's blockage in 1827 of Hegel's entrance into the prestigious *Akademie der Wissenschaften*. In retaliation Hegel founded an organization of his own, *Die Societät für*

wissenschaftliche Kritik; and when Ranke's name was put forward for the latter, Hegel is reputed to have responded, "He is only an ordinary historian" (*das ist nur ein gewöhnlicher Historiker*).²⁸

Frederick Beiser has examined the relationship between Hegel and Ranke in an article cited in the preceding note. Ranke became the most influential critic of Hegel's philosophy of world history, arguing that Hegel's approach to history could not claim to be a "science"; and by doing so he seems to have permanently influenced historians' views of Hegel. Despite this critique, Beiser shows that Hegel and Ranke in fact agreed upon several of the central principles of scientific history: criticism, impartiality, the primacy of induction over deduction, and even the importance of "individuality" in history. They both rejected the pragmatic historiography favored by the Enlightenment with its emphasis on moral instruction. But the two worked from different philosophical perspectives, which nonetheless shared a common idealist heritage. The differences were epistemological and metaphysical. *Epistemologically*, Ranke was a disciple of Immanuel Kant and F. H. Jacobi. He accepted Kant's critique of the limits of theoretical knowledge; as a consequence what Hegel called "universal world history" must be a *regulative*, not a conceptual ideal, a goal that could be approached but never attained. He also accepted Jacobi's teaching about the value of intuitive insight into concrete existence and Jacobi's substitution of faith for knowledge of God and God's purposes. J. G. Fichte was Ranke's model of a philosophical historian, and he read Hegel as a Fichtean philosopher who imposed a priori categories on history, while Hegel read Ranke as a reflective historian who could never arrive at philosophical world history—at actual knowledge of reason and of God in history, despite his personal belief in God. *Metaphysically*, Ranke departed from Hegel's organic holism and accorded ontological independence to the individual. The individual does not find his or her identity from participation in an ethical community but from the ability to make free choices unencumbered by governing laws. By embracing the Kantian–Fichtean conception of transcendental freedom, Ranke became a target of Hegel's critique of free will (*Willkür*) as a distorted form of freedom.²⁹

²⁸ See Frederick C. Beiser, "Hegel and Ranke: A Re-Examination," in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 332–50, esp. 343–4.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 339–40.

But these epistemological and metaphysical differences are not discussed in Hegel's manuscript fragment of 1828. There Ranke is offered as an example of the "universal" form of reflective history. Ranke rightly sees that the usual surveys of history are too abstract and dry, but to compensate for this tendency he piles detail upon detail so that in the end one gets lost in them and does not grasp the whole. Hegel compares Ranke's history of the Roman and Germanic peoples with Walter Scott's novels and suggests that such narratives are better left to novelists than to historians (M_{22/28} 75). Ranke would have agreed with the broader point Hegel is making, that history cannot simply be a matter of determining the facts and being accurate about details. Hegel is offering an internal critique of Ranke: that he failed to achieve his own ideal of unity—a shortcoming that Ranke himself and his critics later admitted.³⁰ Thus universal history can be but one step in a dialectical process that must move on through other forms of reflective history and ultimately to philosophical history.

Niebuhr is addressed as an example of the "critical" form of reflective history. Critical history is the history of history, the critical evaluation of historical narratives. Again, Hegel offers an internal critique of Niebuhr's work on Roman history. Niebuhr and other critical historians read various arbitrary representations and fantasies into history; for example, Niebuhr assumes that a primeval people, referenced in a Roman epic, is found at the beginning of Roman history (M 81 incl. n. 11, L 139).³¹ Thus critical history must move beyond the preoccupations of a single investigator toward a more general history of ideas. Beiser concludes that, by his polemic against Ranke and Niebuhr, Hegel shows himself to have been extraordinarily sensitive to the methodological issues raised by the historical school.³² He does not negate the kind of work done by "ordinary" historians but demonstrates how various aporias emerge in their treatment of the fundamental distinction between event and narrative, object and consciousness; these aporias are resolved by the speculative approach.

³⁰ Ibid. 344–5.

³¹ Ibid. 345–6. In the lectures of 1830–1 Hegel refers several times to Niebuhr in his discussion of the Roman World. He says Niebuhr's treatise on the peoples of Italy has nothing to do with the history of the Roman people; later he claims that Niebuhr makes a "nonessential" distinction about the agrarian laws (L₃₀₋₁ 297, 323–4).

³² Beiser, "Hegel and Ranke," 346.

Philosophical World History

Philosophical world history is elaborated in two forms: as the third type of historiography in the lectures of 1822–3 (L 140–6), and as the “general concept of world history” in the manuscript of 1830 (M 79–86). Since the contexts differ, it is helpful to treat these discussions separately.

The Lectures of 1822–3. Philosophical world history is closely related to the previous type of history, specialized or abstractive, because it is occupied with a universal—not a particular universal but a *concrete* universal. “This universal is the guiding soul of events; it is Mercury, the guide of individual souls, of actions and events. *The idea* is the guide of peoples and of the world; it is *spirit* that guides the world, and its guidance is what we wish to learn about” (L 140). This universal is “infinitely concrete and utterly present” because “spirit is eternally present to itself.” This spiritual principle appears in the various individual folk spirits, but together they constitute the “totality of the one world spirit”—absolute spirit in its historical, worldly configuration—and they stand in a “necessary succession of stages.” Everything is interconnected in a spiritual web, which, just because it is absolute, is not abstract but utterly concrete, related to every entity that is (L 140–1). Hegel’s absolute is not isolated and transcendent but resolves (“absolves”) itself into relations.

To become acquainted with these connections, we must *recognize* and *know* them. Knowledge in turn requires thought. “Thinking is the profoundest aspect of spirit and its highest activity is to comprehend itself,” an activity that it attains for the most part only indirectly while thinking about determinate things. Once it does grasp itself, however, it experiences a kind of death and must move on to a new stage, a different epoch of world history. This is how higher principles come about and how the world advances toward what seems to be an ever-retreating goal. Spirit recognizes its limitations and is forced to move on to a new stage, to find a new problem and a new solution. “The task of world history is to show the matrix in which this comes about.” Its focus is not on individual situations and circumstances but on the spiritual web in which all this is happening (L 141–2).

Three major categories of philosophical world history are identified. The first is that of *change* or *alteration* (*Veränderung*), which follows immediately from what has just been said about spirit. Peoples and states arise, linger for a while, and then vanish. This aspect “can arouse profound sadness that is evoked particularly when observing the ruins of ancient

excellence." This is a sadness not over the passing of individuals but over "the decline and destruction of peoples, of a cultured past. Each new stage is built on the ruins of the past" (L 142).

A second and closely related category is that of the *creation and emergence of new life*. Hegel describes this as the radical idea of Oriental metaphysics, the fact that new life arises out of death. It is found in the belief in the transmigration of souls and the image of the phoenix, which arises anew from the funeral pyre of its own ashes. But this image applies only to the natural body, not to the spirit. "The Western conception is that the spirit comes forth not merely rejuvenated but rather elevated and transfigured." It does not return to the same shape but is elevated to a new and higher shape by its own labor. Thus the concept of simple change becomes that of spirit, which "is disseminating its energies in all directions." The idea of elevation and transfiguration is captured by the Christian image of resurrection, although Hegel does not mention it here. His emphasis in this context is that spirit is constantly active, producing results, consuming them, and moving on to new shapes. The results of its activity are multiple and ambiguous so that there is no simple linear progress in history and no possibility of prediction. "Sometimes phenomena appear that shine with beauty and freedom; sometimes energy, even depraved energy, creates dominion and power; sometimes summoning all one's strength produces only tiny results; and sometimes an insignificant event has the most enormous consequences." History is a variegated product of human spirit in all its misery and splendor (L 142–3).

The third category is introduced by the question about the meaning of all these events, about the ultimate purpose of the "enormous cost" of historical struggle. Hegel writes:

We are faced with the question as to whether the din and noisy surface appearances [of history] do not conceal an inner, silent, secret working that gathers up the energy of all phenomena and benefits therefrom—something [for the sake of which] all this is happening. This is the third category, that of *reason*, the conception of a final end within itself. . . . It is a truth that such a final end is what governs and alone consummates itself in the events that occur to peoples, and that therefore there is *reason in world history*.

This truth must be presupposed at the moment; the proof of its truth is found in the actual treatment of world history. One of the questions we must ask is whether Hegel's treatment in fact furnishes the proof. We shall discover that the question of truth rises to the surface only rarely and that

the demonstration remains implicit. In fact, Hegel says that philosophical world history is more an "exposition" than a "demonstration" of the presence of reason in history. The proof is furnished by the cognition of reason itself, which occurs principally in the logic (L 144).

In history, we find a "likeness" (*Abbild*) of the "one archetype" (*Urbild*). The archetype is the reason that proves itself in history, silently as it were, whereas the likeness is what actually appears in the peoples of history with their struggles and labors. Hegel is thus led to a famous remark:

In order to recognize reason in history or to know history rationally, we must surely bring reason along with us; for the way in which we look upon history and the world is how it in turn looks to us. . . . History is empty; nothing is to be learned from it if we do not bring reason and spirit with us. . . . One must know beforehand what counts as rational. Without this knowledge we would not find reason [in history]. (L 144)

Hegel recognizes what today we call the "hermeneutical circle." All knowledge is circular in the sense that certain a priori presuppositions are required to begin the process of knowing at all. If we do not bring reason along with us, then we bring something else, perhaps the assumption of chance or contingency, or the assumption of social-psychological laws as governing human events, or the assumption of natural-scientific explanations. Laws and explanations are of course a form of reason, but not the speculative reason of Hegel, which has ontotheological overtones.

These overtones are made explicit when Hegel says that if we do not bring with us the concept of reason, "then we must at least bring that of *faith*—the faith that there is an actual causality in history, and that intelligence and spirit are not given over to chance" (L 145). Faith tells us, as does reason itself, "that the spiritual world is not abandoned by God, that a divine will and final purpose rule in history. God governs the world." Thus "God" is a theological cipher for reason; and the kind of reason in which Hegel is interested has a theological referent, not as a supreme being or a large entity, but as the qualitatively unique source of being, the infinite substance/subject that is utterly relational, that creates and rules the world and suffers and dies in it. This is what people call the "providential plan," but they are hesitant to be specific about the plan, to inquire into how it works; they regard God's providence, like God's being itself, to be "inscrutable and inexhaustible."

At this point, I am infringing on topics that will be discussed in Chapter 5, specifically the knowledge of God, the providence of God, and the

justification of God (theodicy). Suffice it to say for now that Hegel ends his treatment of philosophical world history in the lectures of 1822–3 with an eloquent statement that is reminiscent of Aristotle:

Thus our task is to consider world history and inquire into its final aim. This final end is what God has willed for the world. To this end everything is sacrificed on the altar of the world; this end is what is operative and enlivening. What we know about it is that it is what is most perfect, and God wills the most perfect; what God wills can only be God godself and what is like unto God, God's will. God's will is not distinguished from God, and philosophically we call it *the idea*. Here we must abstract from the religious expression and grasp the concepts in the form of thought. (L 146)³³

The final end of the world, the will of God, God godself, the idea—these are analytically related categories that contribute to our knowledge of reason in world history.

The Manuscript of 1830. Both the manuscript of 1830 and the lectures of 1830–1 begin directly with the concept of the philosophy of world history. Hegel says that the intention is to “treat” history philosophically, which means to contemplate it by means of *thinking*. Humans are just thinking beings, and thinking is involved in everything they do, including the study of history. But critics say that, when it comes to history, thinking should be subordinated to what exists, the given. Philosophy, they believe, imports its own thoughts into history: “It does not leave it as it is but *arranges* it in accord with thought and *constructs* a history a priori. History [so it is said] just has to grasp in unalloyed fashion what is, what has been—events and deeds” (M 78). We thus recognize that the problematic is similar to what is addressed in 1822 and 1828, the relationship of event and narrative; but the history of historiography is omitted.

As to the criticism that philosophy imports its own thoughts into history, Hegel writes:

The sole conception that [philosophy] brings with it is the simple conception of *reason*—the conception that reason governs the world, and that therefore world history is a rational process. From the point of view of history as such, this conviction and insight is a *presupposition*. Within philosophy itself this is no presupposition: by means of speculative cognition it is *proved* that *reason*—and we

³³ Hegel quotes Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1072^b 18–30, at the end of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, § 577; see the translation in G. W. F. Hegel: *Theologian of the Spirit*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 153–4.

can adopt this expression for the moment without discussing more precisely its connection and relationship to God—is *substance* and infinite power. [It is] itself the *infinite material* of all natural and spiritual life and the *infinite form* that activates this its content. [It is] the *substance* whereby and wherein all actuality has its being and subsistence. [It is] infinite *power*, for reason is not so impotent as to yield only an ideal or a moral ought. . . . [It is] the infinite *content*, all essentiality and truth, itself constituting the material on which it operates by its own activity. . . . It feeds upon itself, it is itself the material that it labors on. Just as it is itself its own presupposition, its own end, the absolute final end, so it is itself the activation and the bringing forth, out of inwardness into appearance, into world history, not only of the natural universe but also of the spiritual realm. That only this idea is the true, the eternal, the almighty, that it reveals itself in the world, and that nothing is revealed in the world except it, its glory and honor—this is . . . what is proved in philosophy.

(M 79–80)³⁴

This “sole conception” proves to be an audacious one. Reason (and “God”) are infinite substance and infinite power—the power that constitutes “the material on which it operates by its own activity.” It is both infinite substance and infinite subject (agency), which together comprise “absolute spirit.” Absolute spirit orients the natural and spiritual worlds to an ultimate end or purpose, which is its own glory and honor. This preconception, Hegel claims, is really more of an “overview” of the whole of history, the result of the inquiry he is about to undertake. What will make itself evident from the consideration of world history itself “is that a rational process has been taking place in it, that world history is the rational and necessary course of world spirit.” World spirit (*Weltgeist*) is the one substance and subject of history. In its logical or pretemporal aspect it is absolute spirit (*absoluter Geist*); its historical configurations include the spirit of peoples or nations (*Volksgeister*) and of individual human beings (*Geister*). All this is both the presupposition and the result of history itself (M 80–1). This presupposition and result, this “speculative cognition,” can be described as Hegel’s *metahistory*; and every historian has a metahistorical perspective, whether acknowledged or not.³⁵

³⁴ The similarity of this formulation to the argument in Hegel’s *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God* will be discussed in Ch. 5 below. Hegel lectured on the proofs in the summer semester of 1829, just over a year before he wrote the manuscript of 1830. The proofs establish that God is infinite substance, infinite power, and infinite form (or subject).

³⁵ See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), ch. 2.

Hegel proposes an empirical test for his claim. History “must be taken as it is; we must proceed in a historical, empirical fashion.” He does not elaborate on this statement but rather contrasts his view with the professional historians who read “a priori fictions into history,” such as the claim that history began in a paradisiacal condition of perfect knowledge and insight deriving directly from God. Whether world history taken as it is can actually yield the conviction that a rational process is taking place in it—especially the sort of speculative reason that Hegel affirms—has been argued about ever since these words were written. Hegel agrees that we must apprehend history “accurately,” but the terms “accuracy” and “apprehension” are ambiguous. He explains:

Even the ordinary, average historian, who believes . . . that he devotes himself only to the given, is not passive in his thinking and introduces his own categories as medium through which to view the available evidence. The truth does not lie on the superficial plane of the senses; in regard to everything that aims to be scientific, reason may not slumber and must employ meditative thinking (*Nachdenken*). Whoever looks at the world rationally sees *it* as rational too; the two exist in a reciprocal relationship. (M 81)

Here the hermeneutical circle is adduced again, and the point is similar to that made in 1822–3 but with distinctive nuances. The category of “meditative thinking” is introduced, which suggests the influence of the mystical tradition on Hegel’s philosophy—a rational mysticism or “Hermeticism.”³⁶ The rational categories cannot be merely those of humanly constructed sciences (natural, social, psychological, etc.) but must have a depth dimension that goes below the superficial plane of the senses. Moreover, the world and rationality exist in a “reciprocal relationship,” which suggests that reason must be both brought to the world and found in it.

Rather than expanding on these remarks, Hegel introduces two points about the conviction that reason has governed and continues to govern the world. The Presocratic philosopher Anaxagoras was the first to say that *nous* rules the world. *Nous* means understanding or reason in general,

³⁶ See Glenn Alexander Magee, “Hegel and Mysticism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 253–80. The *Corpus Hermeticum* was a collection of ancient Gnostic texts that invoked the name of Hermes, the messenger of the gods. In L 140 Hegel refers to Mercury, the Latin name of Hermes. The word “hermeneutics” also derives from the name Hermes.

expressed as natural laws, but not intelligence in the sense of self-conscious reason, thus not spirit as such. In this respect it is a deficient concept, as Socrates discovered, but it has become a ruling principle in philosophy, by contrast with the Epicurean notion that everything is attributable to *chance*. What appears to us to be chance is the result of minutely refined natural laws in particular instances. The question is more complex with historical as opposed to natural events, where freedom prevails rather than natural causality, but this is a topic that Hegel does not pursue further here (M 82–3). Rather he turns to his second point, which is “the religious truth that the world is not given over to chance and external, contingent causes, but is *ruled by providence*.” “Divine providence is the wisdom that has the infinite power to actualize its purposes.” This is a wisdom that operates in and upon free human activity, but how it does so and what providence means are topics for later chapters. Hegel concludes this section with an excursus on the knowledge, revelation, and justification of God (theodicy), topics to which I shall also return (M 83–6).

Evaluation and Critique. Among several questions that can be raised about philosophical world history, two in particular are noteworthy. I mention them only briefly at this point. (1) What does it mean to say that reason governs or rules world history? (2) Can Hegel's thought be interpreted in strictly humanistic terms?

The first question can be addressed by reflecting on a tragic event in recent American history (an event that occurred just a few weeks prior to my first writing these words). On January 8, 2011, a deranged gunman severely wounded Representative Gabrielle Giffords in an assassination attempt and killed six others who were attending her “Congress on Your Corner” rally at a local supermarket in Tucson, Arizona. Among the dead were a US District Court judge and a 9-year-old girl, Christina-Taylor Green, who was accompanied by her neighbor and friend, Suzi Hileman, on a morning outing to see “democracy in action.” This event can be “explained” in terms of a sequence of causes that brought conditions together to produce a fateful, horrific moment. The gunman, apparently suffering from untreated mental illness, was driven by an incoherent rage; the laws of the state and nation made guns excessively easy to obtain; mental health treatment had a low, nearly non-existent priority; recent political rhetoric was redolent with the imagery of violence; the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology operated as usual; and individuals made free (though “motivated”) choices that brought them together.

While the event can be understood to be “rational” in this sense, it is the tragic, irrational aspect of rationality that is on display here. This cannot mean that such an event results from the will of God or from the reason that governs the world. Various types of causes function in the world—material, efficient, formal, final³⁷—but only the latter is an expression of aim or purpose. The reason that governs the world is a *final* causality that struggles “cunningly” against the violent forces that often rule world events. It also functions as a lure, an ideal that seeks its actualization by its peculiar power, which is spiritual power, not physical force. While recovering from her own wounds, Ms Hileman granted an interview and spoke about her anguish. She and Christina had been talking about the American system of political representation and how Christina might become a representative someday herself when suddenly everything changed in an instant (illustrated by a loud clap of her hands). “I am a woman who took a little girl to the market,” she said. “I don’t feel guilty about that. I can feel bad about what happened, but I can’t feel bad about being there. What happened had nothing to do with Christina and me and why we were there.” Why they were there had to do with the end of history—what God has willed for the world, the idea of human freedom—and it could not be stopped by gunshots. Their particular end participated in the final end. In history we see only a “likeness,” not the end itself. The final end would build on the residue of this shaking event as people reflected on their own mortality, on what it meant that a girl born on 9/11 with great promise died in an exercise of democracy, that an older woman could find her voice again, that the injured congresswoman could struggle to recover from a grievous brain injury. The final end would prevail even if the nation could not alter its delusion about guns, wars, and violence or reverse its cultural death-spiral.

The answer to the second question is that Hegel’s philosophy of world history can indeed be interpreted in humanistic terms, but not strictly or exclusively humanistic. Terry Pinkard offers such an interpretation in an impressive essay,³⁸ and in doing so he represents many if not most Hegel

³⁷ On the Aristotelian categories of causality and how they function in Hegel’s philosophy of world history, see O’Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History*, 45–7.

³⁸ Terry Pinkard, “Contingency and Necessity in History: Rethinking Hegel,” in *Die Weltgeschichte—das Weltgericht: Stuttgarter Hegel Kongreß 1999*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner and Walter Mesch (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), 95–118.

scholars of our time. His argument is as follows. History is concerned not with natural laws but with the various explications that *Geist* gives of itself over time, i.e. the competing and contrasting interpretations of what it ultimately means to be human. This requires empirical study of the facts but also recognition that some sort of necessity is at work in the principle of the development of history, namely, the progressive realization of freedom. In history, we encounter not a pure space of reasons (logic) but finitized reason, a complex social structure of mutual recognition. The commitment to reason is part of a larger scheme of commitments, but there is nothing outside reason to underwrite its claims. The logic of history has led to the modern elevation of freedom as being the supreme principle of modern life and indeed the outcome of the whole story. There is no need to appeal to external guidance from providence or from nature. It is not nature or providence that has been pushing us around, but *we ourselves*, as those who have fashioned and imposed the various self-interpretations by which we have lived. The absolute is not absolute substance/subject but pure negativity itself, a historical activity of self-determination, which is what it means to be a subject. Such is the destiny of history, which does not eclipse contingencies or rule out retrogressions. Hegel's own vision was unavoidably parochial, and the progress of world history is still open; but in modernity we have an unsurpassable and unprecedented self-consciousness about life and the contingent place of European civilization in a newly emerging plurality of world-civilizations. All this seems to be our historical fate, and there is no further explanation as to why we have arrived at this fate.

A humanist interpretation is possible because Hegel can and must be interpreted on three levels: historical-humanist, ethical-social, and ontological-theological.³⁹ Those who can make little sense of the last still find resources from the first two. This accounts for what Frederick Beiser calls "the puzzling Hegel renaissance":⁴⁰

If our scholarship is historically accurate, we confront a Hegel with profound metaphysical concerns alien to the spirit of contemporary philosophical culture, which mistrusts metaphysics. But if we continue to interpret Hegel in a

³⁹ See Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ch. 1; and Rudolf J. Siebert, *Hegel's Philosophy of History: Theological, Humanistic, and Scientific Elements* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979).

⁴⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, "Introduction: The Puzzling Hegel Renaissance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, 1–14, esp. 6–9.

nonmetaphysical manner, we have to accept that our interpretation is more a construction of our contemporary interests than the real historical school. . . . The more we interpret historical figures from *our* standpoint and according to our interests, the more we commit anachronism, imposing the present upon the past; but the more we interpret them from *their* standpoint, the more we engage in antiquarianism, as if any historical facts were interesting for their own sake.

Beiser's solution is as follows: "There is a strong case to be made for bracketing our own contemporary philosophical interests and examining Hegel in his historical context. In this case, we reconstruct Hegel's position as a contribution to a past conversation." My objection to this solution is that we are then left precisely with an antiquarian Hegel who in his metaphysical heart cannot speak to our contemporary conversation. A better solution is to recognize that the historical-humanist and ethical-social levels are integrated by Hegel himself with the ontological-theological level, and that the latter can be retrieved in a contemporary intelligibility. To do so requires recognizing that Hegel was engaged in a reconstruction of the metaphysical and theological claims of the tradition and that as such he made a profound contribution to modern philosophy and theology.⁴¹ Lack of knowledge of the history of modern theology impedes critics such as Pinkard and Beiser. A theologian cringes when Pinkard says that there is no need to appeal "to external guidance from providence," or that providence has been "pushing us around," or that spirit is strictly a human product. Such language suggests a static theology that is forever engaged with a supernatural causality or a supreme being who intervenes directly in human and historical affairs. That this is not Hegel's view of providence, and that his concept of *Geist* is not one-dimensional, will be demonstrated in the following chapters. The question rather is how the three levels are reciprocally dependent on each other, and how they can be integrated without compromising the integrity of each. Without the third level, we have the contingent fact that humanity has arrived at a certain self-interpretation, and we lack resources for confronting the tragic depth of history. One has to respect those for whom this is the most that can be said, and what they say may be true; but it is not Hegel's own view.

⁴¹ On Hegel's reconstructive efforts, see his "Preliminary Conception" to the Science of Logic, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §§ 19–78 (pp. 45–124); and his introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 83–184.

2

History and the Progress of the Consciousness of Freedom

The introduction to the lectures of 1822–3 treats “the concept of world history.” The manuscript of 1830 parallels the earlier lectures to some degree, but the organization of the two documents is different. This difference is illustrated by the outline below.

The lectures of 1822–3 begin with a discussion of “the types of treatment of history,” which is not found in the manuscript of 1830 (but rather in the fragments of 1822/8). A central second section comprises “the idea of human freedom,” which starts with the image of the weaving of crossed threads, followed by a treatment of the concept of spirit as intrinsically free and present to itself. The second section continues with a discussion of the development of the concept of spirit (the “beginning,” “progress,” and “end” of history); and it ends with an expansion of the initial imagery, showing how spirit is actualized through the interweaving of human passions and the divine idea. The third main section addresses “the nature of the state” (including the relationship of the state to spirit and to nature, or “geography”), and the presentation ends with “the division of world history.”

The manuscript of 1830 is divided into three main sections: “the general concept of world history,” “the actualization of spirit in history,” and “the course of world history.” The outline shows how the contents of these sections parallel corresponding elements in the lectures of 1822–3. The manuscript’s third section, “the course of world history,” breaks off abruptly and differs completely from what is found in the transcriptions of the lectures as delivered in 1830–1. The latter lectures continue with a discussion of “world history and geography” and “the division of world history,” not as part of the introduction per se (as they are in 1822–3) but as an addendum that appears between the introduction and the beginning of “the Oriental World.”

Two Versions of the Introduction

The Lectures of 1822–3

The Types of Treatment of History

- Original History
- Reflective History
- Philosophical World History

The Idea of Human Freedom

- The Fabric of World History
- The Concept of Spirit
- The Beginning of History
- The Progress of History
- The End of History
- Human Passions and the Divine Idea

The Nature of the State

- The State and the Actualization of Freedom
- The Constitution of the State
- The State and Religion, Art, Science, and Culture
- The State and Geography

The Division of World History

The Manuscript of 1830

- A. The General Concept of World History
- B. The Actualization of Spirit in History

- a. The General Definition of Spirit as Intrinsically Free

- b. The Means of Spirit's Actualization: Passions, Ideals

- c. The Material of Spirit's Actualization: the State

- d. The Constitution

C. The Course of World History

- a. The Principle of Development
- b. The Stages of Development
- c. The Beginning of World History
- d. The Course of Development of World History

My presentation in this chapter combines the two sources into an arrangement that draws from each. Hayden White argues that for Hegel the historical field is apprehended in a twofold structure.¹ As a *synchronic* structure, it considers the elements that constitute history as the

¹ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 118–22.

actualization of freedom. These include the topics taken up by Hegel in sect. B of the manuscript: the definition of spirit as intrinsically free, the means of spirit's actualization (passions, ideals), and the material of spirit's actualization (the state, the constitution). Here the central question is one of *purpose* in the midst of apparent chaos (passions, self-interest, violence, frustrated plans and projects). As a *diachronic structure*, history follows the stages of spirit's *development* as set forth in sect. C of the manuscript on the course of world history (and elaborated in the main part of the work). The outline shows that these two structures are mixed together in the lectures of 1822–3, with the theme of development interposed between the concept of spirit and its actualization through the interplay of passions and ideals. Each organization has its advantages, and we cannot say definitively that 1830 is Hegel's preferred structure. The chief advantage of 1822–3 is that it allows for a fuller treatment of the state, including its relationship to spiritual productions (religion, art, science, culture) and to natural geography (which is viewed as integral to the state). In any event, the synchronic and diachronic dimensions, purpose and development, are interwoven in Hegel's thought because history entails both "the consciousness of freedom" and "progress." This is the topic of the present chapter, drawing resources from both 1822–3 and 1830. Chapter 3 takes up the state as the material of spirit's actualization, with most of its detail coming from 1822–3; and Chapter 4 summarizes the course of world history in the main body of the work, drawing principally from the lectures of 1822–3, but with additional references to the lectures of 1830–1 as appropriate.

Chapter 5 introduces a third structure, not mentioned by White, which might be called the *surchronic*. By "surchronic" I mean a dimension that is not nontemporal or atemporal but more-than-temporal in the sense of an *intensification* of the temporal, just as "surreal" suggests an intensification of the real. The surchronic is a more primordial and infinite temporality in which the dimensions of time (past, present, future) coinhere without collapsing into identity.² This is what Hegel calls the eternal history of God, and it provides a depth dimension to purpose and development. These three structures express different aspects of time and history, and their interaction produces a three-dimensional whole. Hegel is the first

² See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 416 n. 13.

great philosopher to introduce temporality and historicity into the very fabric of his thought.

Human Spirit as Intrinsically Free

The Manuscript (and Lectures) of 1830. Hegel begins with an abstract definition of what spirit is “intrinsically,” namely “freedom.” By this definition, he is led directly into a discussion of three modes of consciousness of freedom that have appeared in history, namely, that *one* is free, that *some* are free, and that *all* are free—a topic to be addressed in the second section of this chapter. Hegel continues by noting that spirit’s consciousness of its freedom “has been declared to be the *reason* of spirit in its determinacy.” Rational freedom is the destiny of the spiritual world; and, since the natural world is subordinated to the spiritual, it is the final end of the world as a whole. But this freedom has not yet been defined, and it is subject to all sorts of misunderstandings and aberrations, such as that it is principally a matter of individual free choice or that it appears all at once at the beginning of history. He also notes “the immense difference between the principle as it is *intrinsically* or *in itself* and what it is in actuality” (M 87–9).

Hegel does not provide a further definition of the intrinsic concept of spirit in the manuscript, but he does so in the lectures of 1830–1 as delivered.³ There he says: The opposite of spirit is matter, and the substance of matter is *weight*, whereas the substance of spirit is *freedom*. All the attributes of spirit subsist only in virtue of freedom, which is the uniquely authentic quality of spirit. Matter is *heavy* because it presses toward a gravitational center that is outside itself. In gravitating toward its center, it seeks its oneness, its ideality, which is contrary to what it is in reality, where it is dispersed. Spirit, by contrast, has its center *within itself* and does not enjoy oneness apart from itself. Spirit exists within itself and is present to itself.

This very presence-to-self is freedom, for when I am dependent I relate myself to an other that is not me, and I cannot exist without something external [to me]. I am free when I am present to myself. This being-present-to-self on the part of spirit is *self-consciousness*, spirit’s consciousness of itself. . . . Spirit knows itself, is the primal

³ See M 87 n. 30 for an indication of the gap in the manuscript where this material is found.

dividing (*das Urtheilen*) of itself, becomes its own object, and exists for itself—this is the characteristic of freedom. The characteristic of matter is being apart from itself and seeking for unity. (L_{30-I} 10-11)

This comparison of the lightness of spirit with the heaviness of matter is illuminating. Spirit is pulled inward, to its spiritual core, whereas matter is pulled outward by gravity to the material core.⁴ But the core of spirit is not simple identity; it is a “primal dividing,” an intrinsic relatedness of spirit to spirit by which presence and self-consciousness are constituted. Spirit is a social phenomenon, a being-with-self-in-and-for-another, not an isolated atom of free choice. Hegel calls the latter *Willkür*, not *Freiheit*, and free choice is for him a way of thinking of freedom in naturalistic terms. The sociality of freedom has profound implications for Hegel’s concept of ethical life and the state and for his critique of privatization or particularization.⁵ Spirit, we recall, is multidimensional: it is simultaneously individual spirit, social spirit, and universal spirit; and it is only when the three dimensions interact that freedom is fully actualized. Absolute spirit is the core of the spiritual world as opposed to the gravity of the solar system; but the core is dynamic, inwardly complex, and outwardly relating, so it appears as world spirit in peoples and states and as self-consciousness in individual spirits.

Hegel goes on to say in the lectures of 1830-I that “world history is the presentation of the way in which spirit arrives at the consciousness of what it is intrinsically. . . . Spirit must first arrive at the point of being free; it does not know from the outset that it is free—a labor of twenty-five hundred years has brought it to that point for the first time” (L_{30-I} 11-12). Here the lectures rejoin the manuscript with its articulation of the stages of consciousness of freedom. The labor is not yet finished and further tasks remain in the articulation of freedom; it is an unending task because of ever-new repressions and misconceptions.

⁴ Gravity is one of the natural forces known in Hegel’s time, the other being the electrical and magnetic forces. The force that binds things together, the nuclear force, was not discovered until the twentieth century.

⁵ The connection between freedom and ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) is elaborated by Alan Patten in *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), chs. 1, 4. He says that Hegel rejects both the commonsense understanding of freedom as “being able to do as one wants” and the social contract theory. The latter assumes that individuals exist as autonomous units and enter into contracts to attain certain ends. Rather, for Hegel, freedom achieves its actuality only in a sociopolitical organism that undergirds individuality, does not destroy it.

The Lectures of 1822–3. The earlier lectures introduce the concept of freedom by arguing that “we must consider the idea in the element of human spirit, or more precisely, the idea of human freedom.” The idea is the absolute idea or God, but we consider it in the element of human freedom and ethical life. “Freedom is simply the way in which the idea brings itself forth, becoming what it is for the first time in accord with its concept. This bringing forth is displayed in a series of ethical shapes whose sequence constitutes the course of history” (L 146). The reference to ethical shapes means that freedom has in its very concept an intersubjective or social dimension, as does consciousness itself. Hegel writes:

I have consciousness insofar as I am self-consciousness; that is, I know something over against me, something outside me, only insofar as in it I know myself, and I define the other as what makes possible my knowing my own determination in it; hence, I am not just one thing or another but am that of which I know. In other words, I know that that which I am is also object for me. Knowing myself is inseparable from knowing an object. (L 147)

Having themselves as their own objects is what removes immediacy from human beings and distinguishes them from animals. Animals feel and have drives for which they seek immediate satisfaction, but humans alone think. The drive of thinking is to transpose what is real into ourselves as something that is universal and ideal. By so doing, we are able to interrupt our sensuous drives and restrain them. Then we are able to orient ourselves to purposes, to something universal. “The most boundless universal is boundless freedom. Human beings can posit this freedom as their aim or purpose,” and this in turn constitutes them as autonomous and volitional beings (L 148–9). This positing is accomplished not immediately but only through a movement of mediation by which humans go out from themselves, negate their immediacy, and return into themselves. “Thus spirit is only what it makes of itself by its activity.” We should not picture this process as a departure from a place and a return to the prior location, because such an image presupposes that the subject is what is first. In fact, says Hegel, “it is the second aspect, the return into itself, that for the first time constitutes the subject, the actual, the true; in other words, spirit exists only as its result, not as what is merely initial and immediate. This is the guiding principle for the whole of world history” (L 150).

Hegel uses the image of the seed to illustrate this principle. The seed is both beginning and end, kernel and fruit. A plant grows from a seed and

produces fruit, which becomes the seed of a new plant. Just as a plant does not repollinate itself, the fruit that a people produces does not return into the shoot of which it is an offspring; it cannot be enjoyed by the people who produced it but rather becomes for them a “bitter potion” because it passes over into the seed of another people.⁶ This passing over is in part what constitutes the tragic aspect of history—that spirit is always in process of becoming what it is intrinsically, transcending and negating what it was before, dying and rising in a new configuration. It cannot relax for long and enjoy its own fruit. Spirit has its potentiality only as a vocation, an imperative, which requires discipline, education, and progression. “Because humans are spiritual beings, they must acquire everything for themselves, must make themselves into what they ought to be and what otherwise would remain a mere potentiality. . . . Thus spirit is humanity’s own achievement.” Hegel ends with the surprising remark that the most sublime example of this quality of spirit is found in the nature of God, who is not, however, properly an example but “the true itself, whereof everything else is but an example” (L 151). I do not pursue that comparison here but reserve it to the discussion in Chapter 5 of the trinitarian nature of God as self-producing. Humanity’s own achievement—the consciousness of freedom—is absolute spirit’s ultimate fulfillment.

The Progress of the Consciousness of Freedom

The manuscript of 1830 continues its analysis of the intrinsic freedom of spirit by distinguishing three stages of consciousness. First, in the Oriental World, there was no awareness that the human being as such is intrinsically free. The Orientals knew that only *one* person is free, and for this reason “such freedom is merely arbitrariness, savagery, and dull-witted passion.” This one is therefore a despot, not a truly free person. The consciousness of freedom first arose among the Greeks, but they, like the Romans, knew that only *some* are free (citizens for the Greeks, aristocrats for the Romans),

⁶ This accounts for Hegel’s view that a people can be the primary bearer of spirit only once (L 165), although of course spirit continues to be subordinately present in past world-historical peoples. What the theory does not seem to take into account is that when spirit has circumnavigated the globe it might return to its geographic origin and appear again in an ancient people who are reborn to a new purpose. Just this seems to be happening with China and India in the twenty-first century. In any event, every civilization is transient, preparing the seeds of its own destruction.

not human beings as such. Greeks and Romans continued to own slaves, upon whom their life and freedom depended, so theirs was an incomplete freedom that imposed a harsh servitude on others. The Germanic or European nations “were the first to come to the consciousness, through Christianity, that the human being as human is free, that the freedom of spirit constitutes humanity’s truly inherent nature.” Although Christianity acquired this insight in principle, through the union of infinite and finite spirit in a specific human being, a “long and arduous labor” was required to incorporate the principle into secular existence. “The *application* of this principle to actuality, the penetration and transformation of worldly conditions by the principle of freedom, is the long process that is history itself.”⁷ Hegel is thus led to his famous formulation: “World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom—a progress whose necessity we have to recognize” (M 87–8). In the margin, he alludes to G. E. Lessing by noting that this progress entails an “education of the human race,” which is an education to freedom, not directly but as a result.⁸ Progressive education was a popular theme of the Enlightenment, but Hegel deepened and historicized it.⁹ Education to freedom requires an extended labor on the part of spirit, an enormous struggle with the forces of unfreedom, passion, ignorance, and evil. This education has consumed the whole of history and indeed provides the divisions by which world history is to be treated (the Oriental World, the Greek and Roman Worlds, and the Germanic-European World).

Hegel reprises the progress of the consciousness of freedom in his discussion of the stages of development of world history later in the manuscript (under the heading “the course of world history”). There he writes:

⁷ This typology of stages of the consciousness of freedom is already found in Hegel’s 1820–1 lectures on the history of philosophy, and it is repeated on several occasions in different contexts. See *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, ed. Robert F. Brown, trans. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009), i. 181, 195.

⁸ See Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (Berlin, 1780). In the lectures of 1830 Lessing is mentioned explicitly (L30–1 13).

⁹ See George Dennis O’Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 107–10. O’Brien prefers an artistic analogy: the relation between the idea of freedom and its realization in history is akin to the relationship of an artistic idea in the mind of an artist to its realization in the medium. We have the idea only in the medium. The theological aspect of the idea is recognized by this analogy if God is understood to be the inner artisan (see below, pp. 146, 165–6).

The first stage is that of immediacy, and . . . in it spirit remains immersed in the natural state in which it exists in a condition of unfree singularity (*one* is free). In the second stage spirit emerges into the consciousness of its freedom, but this first breaking loose is incomplete and partial (*some* are free) because it originates from the immediacy of the natural state, is related to it, and is still encumbered with it as a moment. In the third stage spirit is elevated out of this still *particular* freedom into freedom's pure universality (the human being *as such* is free)—elevated into the self-consciousness and self-awareness of the essence of spirituality. (M 110)

Here the stages are attributed to the lingering "encumbrance" of nature, which singularizes or particularizes freedom, treating it as a natural entity, not allowing the self-mediation by which freedom emerges. Humanity shakes off this residue of nature gradually and never completely; reversions to it are found in wars, violence, dictatorships, etc., where sheer force prevails. But "it is the drive, the impulse of spiritual life within itself to break through the bond, the rind of natural and sensuous life, of whatever is alien to it, and to come to the light of consciousness, that is, to itself" (M 111).

The lectures of 1822–3 do not discuss the progress of the consciousness of freedom explicitly, but they do emphasize a distinction between the "levels" of nature and the "stages" of spirit. In nature, on Hegel's view, the species exist on different levels but make no progress, whereas progression is intrinsic to spirit.

The ladder of stages that spirit climbs and the labor needed to grasp its concept make it clear that the concept drives itself forward through the sublation and reworking of the previous, lower stage, which, once transformed by time, falls into the past. . . . The existence of a new shape that is the transfiguration of the lower, previous principle demonstrates that the series of spiritual shapes comes about in time. (L 156)

Time constitutes history, and only spirit has a history.

The series of spiritual shapes forms a history of the consciousness of freedom. After Hegel has traversed all the shapes, he looks back from the perspective of the narrative climax of his story, which is that of the "freedom of faith" as articulated in the Protestant Reformation. This is a faith that participates ontologically in the true content and makes this content its own, thus unifying objective truth with subjective conviction.

This is the new and ultimate banner around which peoples gather, the flag of freedom, of the true spirit. This is the spirit of the modern era, and it designates the modern period. The ages prior to our age have faced but one labor, have had but

one task, and that has been to incorporate this principle into actuality, thereby achieving for this principle the form of freedom, of universality. (L 505–6)

One of the questions we face is whether this version of the goal of history, based on modern Protestantism and its Western secularization, can be broadened to embrace the insights of diverse peoples in a culturally plural world. What can we learn from the instantiations of freedom in Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East? Is an integral concept of world freedom possible if by “integral” we mean not “uniform” but “pluriform”? A pluriform vision may be what is required of a postmodern Hegelianism, and it is implicit in the title of this book, “shapes of freedom.” While Hegel did not endorse a pluriform vision in his own time, given his seemingly linear view of the progression of cultures, it is conceivable that he would have in our time. He was certainly aware of the diversity of determinate forms of spirit.

I do not pursue that question now but rather address in the remaining sections of this chapter two aspects of the progress of the consciousness of freedom: that of the *means* of its actualization through the interweaving of passions and ideals (the synchronic aspect), and that of the development of spirit (the diachronic aspect). The pattern of synchrony recurs in Chapter 3 (the state as the *material* of spirit’s actualization), and of diachrony in Chapter 4 (the course of world history).

The Interweaving of Human Passions and Divine Ideals

The Lectures of 1822–3. After establishing that philosophy speaks of God and God’s will as *the divine idea*,¹⁰ Hegel continues by saying that “we must consider the idea in the element of human spirit, or more precisely, the idea of human freedom.” The idea reveals itself in pure thought (logic), immerses itself in physical nature, and assumes the shape of spirit in general, of which human freedom as expressed in the ethical existence of a people is “the more proximate soil.” “Freedom is simply the way in which the idea brings itself forth, becoming what it is for the first time in accord with its concept. This bringing forth is displayed in a series of ethical shapes whose sequence constitutes the course of history” (L 146).

¹⁰ See the passage quoted above, p. 24.

Hegel then introduces a powerful metaphor of the weaving of crossed threads:

Thus we have here the idea as the totality of ethical freedom. Two elements are salient: first, the idea itself as abstract; and second, the human passions. The two together form the weft and the warp in the fabric that world history spreads before us.¹¹ The idea is the substantial power, but considered for itself it is only the universal. The passions of humanity are the arm by which it actualizes itself. These are the extremes; the midpoint at which these elements are bound together, by which they are reconciled, and in which they have their living unification, is ethical freedom. (L 147)

History, then, is a fabric woven by the divine idea as the substantial power and the passions of humanity as the means by which the idea actualizes itself. The term translated as “weft,” *Einschlag*, means literally a “driving” or “striking,” and is related to *Schlag*, “pulse” or “stroke.” This is an image that Hegel associates with the idea, which drives back and forth across the “warp” or “chain” (*Kette*) of human passions, weaving the fabric of history, which assumes the pattern of “ethical freedom” (*sittliche Freiheit*). Evidence that the divine idea is associated with the *Schlag* is found in other lectures. For example, Hegel says (with reference to the state) that “the divine idea has broken through (*eingeschlagen*) into the sphere of actuality”;¹² and that the idea constitutes a ‘counterstroke’ (*Gegenschlag*) that reverses the transition from finite to infinite into a transition from infinite to finite.¹³ History is a divine–human production in which the idea furnishes the guiding power and the passions the material energy.

Hegel returns to this image later in the introduction of 1822–3, when he takes up “the passions and their relationship to the divine idea. . . . It is in and through the passions that the rule, the power, and the dominion of the idea are to be recognized” (L 169; cf. 169–76).

If we compare the colorful drives of passion with the silent and simple life of the idea, which has within itself, and carries out, the absolute final end, then the next great question concerns the nature of their connection. The idea of world history

¹¹ The translation follows here the reading of Griesheim (*den Einschlag und die Kette*) rather than that of Hotho (*die Kette und den Einschlag*).

¹² *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson et al., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), iii. 342 n. 250.

¹³ *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), 165.

necessarily sets forth this connection and contains the unity of the two; it makes this unity utterly fundamental. (L 169)

The idea, Hegel explains, has two aspects. First, it is “the eternal life of God within itself, before, as it were, the creation of the world; it is the logical nexus.” Then it goes forth into antithesis and posits distinctions on their own account. These distinctions constitute the material world including human activity, and they are essential to the idea as it moves from ideality to actuality. The idea, as the unity of the concept and objectivity, *must* actualize itself, and it does so in the natural world and human passions. So the idea includes, as it were “ideally,” its relation to material passions.

The passions constitute the special purposes, interests, and drives of human beings, the factors that motivate them to be who and what they are (L 169–76). The passions, which are linked to sensuous desires, create the determinacy, the particularity and individuality, of persons. Persons “double” themselves: they are finite and they *actualize* their finitude by their passions. If they achieve harmony by this doubling and enjoy themselves in their existence they are called “happy.” Happiness might be considered a factor in history. However, “world history is not a soil of happiness; in history the periods of happiness are blank pages, for the object of history is, at the least, change.” In world history, the satisfaction of universal purposes that transcend the sphere of particular existences does not produce happiness. Whenever change or an advance occurs, happiness is interrupted. Happiness occurs in the interstices of history and in private lives. The role of the great historical figures, world-historical individuals such as Julius Caesar, is to grasp the new universal and turn it to their own purpose. They act to satisfy themselves, not others, but at the same time they do the bidding of the universal. They desire and do what is correct and right, although the latter seems to be their own passion because others do not yet know it.

This is the true connection between passion and the idea. The necessity of the idea is ethical only through the passion of historical human beings and is connected with it. . . . Passion appears . . . as something animal-like in the great individuals; for their being as spirit and their being as something natural are utterly one and the same, and this unity constitutes their strength. Because they are driven unresistingly to do what they do, they are satisfied. In this way they satisfy their passion. They have not been happy; for [their work] has perhaps become bitter to them, or at the moment they achieved their goal they have died or were murdered or exiled. They sacrifice

their personality; their entire work was a sacrifice. And that they were not happy is a consolation for those who need such consolation. (L 176)

A modern example is found in the fate that awaited Winston Churchill after he helped lead the Allies to victory in the Second World War: he was unceremoniously dumped by the British electorate in 1946; but, not being murdered or exiled, he enjoyed a happy “afterlife” as an author and amateur painter. Another, more tragic example is that of Vincent Van Gogh, whose short tortured existence was a sacrifice to his astonishing painting. His work was produced within the span of a few years, and when it was accomplished he brought his life to an end.

Hegel’s explanation of how the idea actually accomplishes its own end through the ends of historical individuals is not clearly developed in the lectures of 1822–3; for that explanation we must turn to the manuscript and lectures of 1830–1.

The Manuscript of 1830 and the Lectures of 1830–1. The manuscript, having established the intrinsic freedom of spirit, addresses the means of spirit’s actualization, namely, human passions and the divine idea (M 89–100). Engagement with the passions is a negative work of the idea, but the idea also has a positive or affirmative work. History shows that the actions of human beings proceed from their *needs, passions, and interests*, although individuals sometimes pursue limited goodness and other virtues. Passions, private interests, the satisfaction of selfish impulses are the most powerful forces in history because they do not heed the limitations of justice and morality. They are not just sensuous, irrational instruments but reason governed by emotions, self-interest, fear, greed, and desire. In fact, the passions are greatly amplified in their destructive power precisely by the use of reason; animals struggle for survival and prey upon one another, but they do not engage in systemic warfare or gratuitous violence (apes may be an exception). Hegel testifies eloquently to the destruction wrought by these passions, to the immensity of evil, the untold miseries of individual human beings, the misfortunes that have befallen even the finest creations of culture, the transience of everything. We react to the frightful picture presented to us by history by withdrawing into sorrow, resignation, and complacency.

[We return] even to that selfish complacency that stands on the calmer shore and, from a secure position, finds satisfaction in the distant scene of confusion and wreckage. But even as we look upon history as this slaughterhouse in which the

happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtues of individuals are sacrificed, our thoughts are necessarily impelled to ask: *to whom, to what final purpose*, have these monstrous sacrifices been made? (M 90)

Hegel does not answer this question conceptually but in the form of examples and a metaphor, which is perhaps indicative of the fact that the answer is not easily grasped. He begins by noting that passions are necessary because they provide the volition and energy by which anything happens at all. To accomplish something, our own interests must be at stake. But all the individual activities by which individuals satisfy their own needs “are at the same time the *means and instruments of a higher and wider purpose, which they know nothing of but unconsciously carry out*” (M 94). He provides examples of how human action can produce an effect entirely different from that intended: a man, out of revenge (whether justified or not), sets fire to someone else’s house, but the fire spreads, destroys much property, costs many lives, and the arsonist, rather than being vindicated, is punished for a crime; or Caesar, by opposing his rivals out of self-interest, gained undivided sovereignty over the empire, thus accomplishing not merely his own negative end but the end for which his age was ready (M 94–6).

At this point, a break occurs in the manuscript where Hegel presented material orally in the lectures that is not included in the manuscript.¹⁴ The transcription by Karl Hegel reads:

In external history we have right before our eyes what is particular, namely, impulses and needs. We see these particular elements engaged in mutual destruction, headed for ruin, [whereas] the idea is what is universal, and in the struggle it is free from assault and is unscathed. This feature can be called the cunning of reason (*die List der Vernunft*), since reason avails itself of these instruments and shines forth unscathed, or rather brings itself forth. Rational purpose (*der Vernunft-Zweck*) realizes itself by means of the needs, passions, and the like of human beings; what is personal or private is quite insignificant over against what is universal; individuals are sacrificed and relinquished. World history represents itself as the conflict of individuals; in the realm of particularity things proceed *naturally*, that is, force (*Gewalt*) prevails. In animal nature, preservation of life is the purpose, impulse, and instinct, and it is this way too in that natural domain to which belong the aims of the passions; these aims are engaged in conflict with one another, are successful,

¹⁴ See M 96 n. 44. The Loose Sheets called “Also Spectacles of Endless Complexities” (127–8) fill the gap with fragmentary notations.

but just as likely come to be destroyed. Reason alone carries weight, pursues its own purpose within the tumult of the world, and lifts itself up. (L30-1 19-20)¹⁵

The conceptual truth behind the metaphor of the “cunning of reason” can be interpreted as follows: reason, because it is *spiritual* and not physical or natural power, must work *negatively*; it overcomes opposition and evil not directly, not by intervention in natural processes or by supernatural means, but indirectly, by letting evil combat evil, allowing passions to wear themselves out, using instruments against their own purposes. Reason in its “cunning” subverts human intentions, has the power of apparent weakness (not of “force” or “violence”), and brings good out of evil. The deep tragedy of history is that in the process many are sacrificed and a terrible price is paid for human freedom. But the vision is ultimately tragicomic, for good *does* come out of evil, however imperfectly, and reconciliation *is* accomplished through conflict.

This interpretation is supported by a passage from *The Science of Logic* where Hegel contrasts “the cunning of reason” with the “force” or “violence” (*Gewalt*) that would result if reason intervened directly in natural processes.¹⁶ Because cunning has the power of apparent weakness, the metaphor can be stretched further to suggest that the power of cunning is like the power of the cross, where God in human shape dies at the hands of human violence but where God’s purpose prevails nonetheless. God “lets” human beings do as they please, but God’s will prevails. The cross represents the great reversal, the counterthrust of the idea. To be

¹⁵ It seems doubtful that this reference to the “cunning of reason” first occurs in the lectures of 1830-1 because different versions of the passage from different years are found in the 1840 *Werke* edn. (*The Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 32-3), and in the Lasson and Hoffmeister edn. (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 89). The idea itself is not new: references to the “cunning of reason” are already found in *The Science of Logic* and *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (see the next note).

¹⁶ *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 746-7. See also *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991), § 209 addition (p. 284): “Reason is as *cunning* as it is *mighty*. Its cunning generally consists in the mediating activity which, while it lets objects act upon one another according to their own nature, and wear each other out, executes only *its* purposes without itself mingling in the process. In this sense we can say that, with regard to the world and its process, divine Providence behaves with absolute cunning. God lets men, who have their particular passions and interests, do as they please, and what results is the accomplishment of *his* intentions, which are something other than those whom he employs were directly concerned about.” I address the theme of providence in Ch. 5.

sure, Hegel also says that in the struggle the idea remains free from assault and unscathed, and this remark may call into question the analogy with the cross. But even in the crucifixion God as God remains unscathed. The peculiar power of God is that God both suffers death and prevails over death, takes death up into God's own eternal life. The cross is a negative sign of God's power in the world, and it is by the negation of negation that spiritual power prevails. None of this should be construed to mean that the "slaughterhouse" of history is justified on its own account, or that, because good can be brought out of evil, evil as such is justified or is really a good in disguise because it prepares the way for a greater good. It is God who is justified, not evil.

Eberhard Jüngel comments on the passage quoted above as follows:

In making what one will of Hegel's *cunning of reason* (a not very humanly-reassuring expression), one ought not, in any event, to overlook the fact that Hegel does not rationalize away "the total mass of concrete evils" in world history. Quite the contrary, he takes it so seriously that it calls for *reconciliation*, indeed, reconciliation on the part of the self-divesting God. . . . This reconciliation takes place in the course of history itself. "Indeed, there is no arena in which such a reconciling knowledge is more urgently needed than in world history." And where such reconciling knowledge takes place is the point at which world-historical "consideration" becomes "a theodicy, a justification (*Rechtfertigung*) of God." For the judgment of the world (*Weltgericht*), which takes place in world history conceived as theodicy, it means that this is not a *judgment* for the purpose of *retribution* (*Vergeltung*) but instead a *judgment* in the service of *reconciliation* (*Versöhnung*). God justifies godself not by *exercising retribution* but instead by *reconciling*.¹⁷

Jüngel here touches on a topic—theodicy, the justification of God—that I shall address in Chapter 5. The point at the moment is that Hegel does not rationalize evil away, including the rationalization that God allows it to happen for the sake of a greater good. Evil is a brute fact of history, a condition of the finite world in which free, fallible, and destructive forces are at play. God cannot cancel evil without canceling the world itself. In our present-day world—a post-Holocaust, terrorist-afflicted, environmentally destructive nuclear world—evil has become such an overwhelming force that it appears to be beyond redemption. But Hegel would insist

¹⁷ Eberhard Jüngel, "'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht' aus theologischer Perspektive," in Rüdiger Bubner and Walter Mesch (eds.), *Die Weltgeschichte—das Weltgericht? Stuttgarter Hegel Kongreß 1999* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), 25. Jüngel's quotations are from M 85–6.

that to concede to evil is to allow it to defeat us.¹⁸ God is greater than the power of evil, and what God does is not to punish humanity or exact retribution, or magically eliminate evil, but rather to bring about reconciliation in the face of evil. Indeed, God does this through an act of self-divestment by which God joins humanity in suffering evil and in that very act overcomes it, in part by allowing the combating forces of evil to wear themselves out. This is the cunning of reason. Here the juridical paradigm is broken and is replaced by the paradigm of love.

It may seem odd to link the cunning of reason with the love of God, but this is the direction taken by a theological reading of the metaphor. "Cunning" is a form of reason employed by those who lack the objective power to achieve their ends. It is found, for example, in stories about "Br'er Rabbit," who uses cunning and trickery to outsmart his opponents because he does not have wealth, social status, or political influence. The love of God has a similar sort of objective powerlessness, and it works in a subversive way by allowing evil and destructive passions to use themselves up while at the same time maintaining itself as a power greater than worldly power; it is a power that can never be used up because it is the power of creativity itself.

The strength of divine love is such as even to employ cunning and trickery. Traditions about the divine trickster are found in the Hebrew Bible, but the most famous instance for Christians is the so-called ransom theory of atonement, the oldest of such atonement theories. In this account the Devil captures the souls of sinners; to release them God agrees to a bargain whereby he gives his only son in exchange for humanity; but this son, being God, rises to new life and prevails over demonic power, a power that has to be attacked indirectly.¹⁹

The cunning of reason represents the negative work of the idea; but there is also a positive work in which the idea no longer appears as a *counterthrust* but a *lure*. Morality, ethical life, and religion are means that are

¹⁸ This is the view of Emil L. Fackenheim, who says that to concede to evil and deny God is to hand Hitler a posthumous victory, the destruction of the Jewish people. See *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), and *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967).

¹⁹ See Darby Kathleen Ray, *Deceiving the Devil: Atonement, Abuse, and Ransom* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1998); and John E. Anderson, "Jacob, Laban, and a Divine Trickster: The Covenantal Framework of God's Deception in the Theology of the Jacob Cycle," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36 (2009): 3–23.

suitable to their ends because they are governed by the divine principle of reason, the divine idea of freedom. "In fulfilling rational ends, [human beings] not only simultaneously fulfill their own particular ends (whose content is quite different from that [of the universal final end]) but also *participate* in that rational end itself, and are thereby ends in themselves" (M 97). The term "participation" suggests that the divine idea functions as a "lure" that draws human actions to higher ends; it has the power of "persuasion," not coercion (and not simply that of cunning). This language of process philosophy is not found in Hegel, but he is moving toward it.²⁰ He is interested in human responsibility combined with divine initiative, but acknowledges that the development of this theme would require a complete treatise on freedom. Hegel's discussion of the connection is quite limited here. But the great project of history is that of overcoming the difference between and achieving the unification of the subjective side (the knowing and willing individual) and the objective, substantial side (the universal final end). That is the topic of the *Weltgeschichte* as a whole (M 97–100).

World History as the Development of Spirit

The manuscript of 1830, having addressed the means of spirit's actualization, next turns to the *material* of its actualization, the state and the constitution, prior to its final section on the "course of world history." I reserve the 1830 treatment of the state until Chapter 3, where I address the topic with resources principally from the lectures of 1822–3. Since the present chapter is concerned with history as the *progress* of the consciousness of freedom, I now ask what historical progress or development means for Hegel, drawing his views from both 1822–3 and 1830–1.

The Beginning of History

At the beginning of history, we find a natural state if by "nature" we mean a condition of immediacy, not the concept or essence of a thing. With Spinoza, we can only rejoice that humanity has departed from such a natural state because in it freedom is lacking and sensuous willing and

²⁰ See *Hegel and Whitehead: Contemporary Perspectives on Systematic Philosophy*, ed. George R. Lucas, Jr. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986).

desire reign supreme. It is only when humanity has left this beginning behind that it takes on a historical existence (L 152). Hegel refutes the popular view, held by Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich Schelling among others of his time, based on the biblical story and other creation myths, that an original condition actually existed and was one of beautiful innocence and pure knowledge. The assumption here, Hegel acknowledges, is that humanity could not have developed from “animal stupor.” This assumption is correct, he says, but humanity could well have developed from human stupor, and that is just what we find at the beginning. Spirit is already imprinted on the human, but it must develop; it is an infinite *energeia* and *entelecheia* that discovers itself in its labor and brings forth its concept, and this production comes last, not first (L 152–4). The distinction between animal and human stupor means that Hegel lacked a recognition that humans evolved from higher species of animals. Animal vitality in his view differs qualitatively from the spiritual potential present in human beings, who are of course also natural beings and share many characteristics with animals. From a post-Darwinian perspective, the “development” of spirit starts far earlier than Hegel thought, in the long transition between “animal” and “human.” Hegel is vague about how and when human beings first appeared, but his view does not entail a theory of “special” creation. Spirit for him is implicitly present in nature, where it slumbers (or where intelligence is “petrified”²¹), and the awakening of spirit first in animals and then in human beings is itself a process that occurs over millennia; in this respect his thought is proto-evolutionary.

In the manuscript of 1830, Hegel expands on his critique of the notion that history began with an original state of innocence, a state of nature in which freedom and justice were supposedly present in perfect form. The biblical account of paradise can provide no support for such a notion because it is not a historical account; thus the claims of Schlegel and Schelling concerning a primitive and pure knowledge of God are pure fiction (M 111–12). Hegel goes on to criticize a movement in Catholic Oriental studies that claims to have found evidence that the true religion is not only what is universal but also what is oldest. The leaders of this

²¹ *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, § 24 addition 1 (p. 56). See Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005). See also *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), §§ 245–51 (pp. 1–25).

movement, including the Abbé Lamennais and Baron von Eckstein, were associated with French Restoration politics; and the fact that Hegel devotes a detailed footnote to them in the manuscript (M 112–13 n. 79) provides evidence that one of his purposes in writing the manuscript was to refute their views. The astronomers Jean Sylvain Bailly and Jean Joseph Delambre claimed that accurate scientific and astronomical information existed among early peoples and was later corrupted. None of these assumptions has any historical foundation, nor can they ever hope to attain one. This research “directly belies itself because it sets out to prove by historical methods what it has presupposed to exist historically” (M 113–14).

We can take up history only at the point when *rationality* begins to appear in worldly existence, not merely as an implicit possibility but as it steps forth into consciousness, volition, and deed. The *prehistory* in which peoples may have had a long life before they organized into literate societies lies outside our interest because no historical records were produced. Hegel takes note of the recently discovered Indo-European linguistic connection, which shows that tribal peoples spread outwards from Asia and developed in disparate ways from a “primordial kinship.” Early languages were highly complex and became simplified only later when systems of writing developed. Great accomplishments remain “buried in the obscurity of a voiceless past” because they lack written language. “Those periods—whether we estimate them in centuries or millennia—that elapsed in the life of peoples before history came to be written, and that may well have been filled with revolutions, migrations, and the most turbulent changes, have no objective history because they have no subjective history, no historical narratives” (M 114–15, 116–17). So the “beginning” of history is really not “history” at all but a lengthy time of fermentation during which humans gradually arranged themselves into social units, sustained themselves by hunting and gathering, fought over territory, and shaped primitive cultural practices; it was certainly no golden era of innocence and pure insight.

The Progression of History

The Lectures of 1822–3. The term used by Hegel, *Fortgang*, means not simply “progress” in the sense of improvement or advance but also “progression” in the sense of process and development. The key category that applies to history is that of *time*. Hegel offers a brief speculative excursus on time.

The quality of the negative is intrinsic to time. For us it is something positive, an event or happening. But what characterizes time is that the opposite can also happen—the relationship of what has being to its nonbeing; and this relationship is time insofar as we do not merely think the relationship but also actually intuit it. The abstract intuition of being and nonbeing is time. (L 155)

This definition of time is drawn from the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, § 258.²² There Hegel says that in “natural” time, the present is the passing over of being into nonbeing (the not-yet of the future), and the future is the passing over of nonbeing into being. The past is the sediment deposited, so to speak, by this reciprocal passage, and as such it is the unity of being and nonbeing, the “truth” of finite time. In “spiritual” time, however, the present is the coinherence of the modes of time; and for absolute spirit this presence is eternity. Chronos, or natural time, “devoured” his own works and achievements, which were ephemeral; Jupiter, the political god, “was the first to vanquish time because he produced an enduring work, the state” (L 161–2). The finitude of natural time, in which every human being passes over into nonbeing or death, is replaced by enduring ethical works that have the stamp of spirit. With the shape of spirit in history, change enters into the concept of spirit itself, which is always pressing to a new stage in which the previous stage is not lost but transfigured (L 156). Thus spirit lives on, but individual human beings, as creatures of nature, pass away.

Hegel’s metaphysic of time is read by Oscar Daniel Brauer as an attempt to overcome dialectically the division between time and eternity.²³ Eternity for Hegel is not a *nunc stans*, something outside or above time, but something that transforms natural time. Eternity itself is “absolute presence,” the process of time itself in the totality of its dimensions. Eternity is not “always being,” nor is it “before” time or “after” time, for then eternity is reduced to an absolutized dimension of natural time. Spirit is not above time, for it “is the concept of time itself.” The absolute now of eternity is not to be confused with the quantitative now of nature. The

²² See Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 34; cf. §§ 257–9 (pp. 33–40).

²³ Oscar Daniel Brauer, *Dialektik der Zeit: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Metaphysik der Weltgeschichte* (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1982), 135–48, esp. 142–7. Brauer argues that, despite Martin Heidegger’s critique of Hegel, the Aristotelian concept of time is incompatible with Hegel’s dialectic, which consists in a theory of being *sub specie temporis*. Heidegger, claims Brauer, by transposing historicity out of history into transcendental Dasein, shows no interest in actual history, as Hegel himself does (27–8).

absolute now is the simultaneous qualitative unity of the dimensions of time. Eternity is the *concept* of time, that is, logical becoming (*Werden*), which maintains the pure form of succession, the structure of passing away and arising anew. Finite spirit is constantly striving for eternity and partially achieving it by its cultural productions; eternity, conversely, is constantly actualizing itself through the shapes of spirit in history. The time of spirit is world history itself.

We are thus led to a consideration of *change* or *alteration* (*Veränderung*) as a central category of history (reprising a discussion already found in “philosophical world history”). In physical nature everything is transitory and alteration is cyclical, so that nothing new is produced. “It is otherwise, however, with the shape of spirit in history. Here change affects not merely the superficial aspect but enters into the concept itself” (L 155–6).

The sphere of spirit differs from the mode of nature because the ladder of stages that spirit climbs and the labor needed to grasp its concept make it clear that the concept drives itself forward through the sublation (*Aufhebung*) and reworking of the previous, lower stage, which, once transformed by time, falls into the past. The previous stage has ceased to exist. The existence of a new shape that is the transfiguration of the lower, previous principle demonstrates that the series of spiritual shapes comes about in time. (L 156)

But because the peoples of history are also in one respect creatures of nature, the shapes they produce not only succeed each other in time but can also stand alongside each other indifferently in space. Thus in actual history we find both stasis and progression, both China and Europe. But we do not find *all* the shapes that have gone past in time still existing alongside each other in the present. The Greeks, Romans, and the ancient Germanic tribes, for example, have all disappeared. Why this is so can only be discussed in terms of the special nature of historical shapes and thus in our treatment of world history itself (L 156–7).

Having considered change as the most direct implication of temporality, Hegel then addresses a related question concerning the specific modes of progress that a people undergoes. This model applies to each of the cultural worlds that are examined in the main part of the work. He distinguishes among three subcategories of cultural formation (*Bildung*): these are refinement (*Bildung*), over-refinement (*Überbildung*), and decline (*Verbildung*) (L 157–8). Cultivation or refinement in general is the activity of the universal, the form of thinking, which is able to restrain what is particular. The activity appears in history as act, object, work. The action

of the spirit of a people is to make itself into an extant world, one that exists in space and time, and it does so by means of work. In the first moment of the history of a people (that of *Bildung*), the people lives for the sake of its work, bringing forth and enacting its inner principle. It has accomplished itself and is gratified (L 158–60).

In the second moment, that of over-refinement (*Überbildung*), spirit, having accomplished itself and created what it wants, no longer needs its activity. It has lost the highest interest of life, that of a not-yet-fulfilled purpose; and it undergoes a transition from adulthood to old age, to the enjoyment of what it has achieved. Spirit now lives with its habitual routine, which leads to natural death (L 160).

Now the third moment arrives, that of decline (*Verbildung*). A people continues to vegetate, no longer possessing a lively spirit with the aspiration to accomplish something new. Spirit as spirit prepares its own downfall, which is also the coming forth of a new life. When self-interests and passions are unleashed as destructive qualities, the downfall of a people is imminent (L 160–1). The transition (*Übergang*) from one world-historical people to the next involves subjecting what is present at hand to *thought*, which has a negative, corrosive quality in the sense of exposing the inner contradictions of a political or ethical system and testing them against universal truth. Spirit consists in grasping the universal, and the universal is found in philosophy, which is its speculative significance. Thus, Hegel claims, philosophy appears in the third stage of the life of a people. Universality is the substance, the essentiality; and particularity, such as being merely a citizen of Athens, melts away. “Particularity of this sort melts under the light of thought, as snow melts under the sun.” When, in a people, thought comprehends universality, that people can no longer remain what it was and must rather attain new and higher determinate qualities. If thought develops in such a way that the particular principle of a people is no longer essential, then this people can no longer endure, and another principle has emerged; a new work is at hand. World history makes a transition from the people that previously was prominent to another people.

For a people cannot traverse several such principles and several stages; it cannot be epoch-making twice in world history, even though it has stages in its development. . . . These are, then, the more precise moments in the process of change; herein reside the moments of the concept in their necessity. These moments are the moving soul of progress. (L 161–6)

Universality can never be fully and definitively grasped in any single formulation but only in an inexhaustible multitude of formulations, each of which adds its own determinacy and is then transcended.

Given the reality of the historical process, with the rise and inevitable decline of cultures, George Dennis O'Brien suggests that it is better to say that history illustrates not simply an advance but a perpetual struggle over human freedom.²⁴ It is a series of noble attempts and tragic failures; sometimes progress occurs, sometimes decline. Hegel often seems close to accepting the view that multiple cultures have progressed toward an ideal state, each with its own triumphs and tragedies, but with no cumulative progress. He does have a theory of cultural decay ("over-refinement"), but decay does not result from natural forces. The biological models favored by Spengler and Toynbee, and partially by Freud, are not employed by Hegel. Rather his explanation is historical: civilizations destroy themselves through *inner* contradictions having to do with rational choices. Reason is the efficient cause of the creation *and* destruction of states. Each destruction incorporates the destroyed culture because it is a destruction by and through culture. A culture decays because it instantiated a belief in individual and social freedom but failed to actualize it adequately, so its decay is inevitable. The problem is that we learn from history, if at all, only slowly, and often repeat past mistakes in new forms; but nonetheless, a slow advance in the consciousness of freedom occurs. O'Brien points to the difference between Hegel's view of the progress of freedom and that of the Enlightenment. Hegel is not naively optimistic; he believes that humanity is essentially historical and that there is no escape from history. Long-range predictions of the future are not possible; we only know that the actualization of freedom is the end product of historical struggle, not the beginning assumption. We see the "necessity" or "inevitability" of history only as we look back.

Because the destruction involves an *entire* culture, and a transition to a new culture, Hegel says that no culture can be epoch-making more than once in world history, although it can of course continue to exist. But he does not seem to have envisioned what might happen when spirit, having circumnavigated the globe, returns to its point of geographical origin. The return would, of course, incorporate the achievement of succeeding

²⁴ O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History*, 145–58.

cultures, and so spirit would spiral ahead into yet another shape, for example, a new Asia. The movement is not simply linear or circular but helical, and world history constitutes a series of such spirals rather than a linear progression from East to West. From Hegel's perspective in the early nineteenth century history may still have looked linear, but from our perspective in the twenty-first century it looks more like a multicultural spiral. Such is closer to Hegel's deep insight that spirit's advance is not that of a straight line or a repetitive circle but of an open helix.

The Manuscript of 1830. Before we address what Hegel means by the "end" of history, it will help to summarize the views set forth in the manuscript of 1830 on "the course of world history," which is the last of the manuscript's three main sections. It starts with "the principle of development" (M 107–10), where Hegel claims that spirit does not drift about in the external play of contingencies but is itself the absolutely determining power, making use of contingencies for its own purposes. Spirit in itself is opposed to itself; it has to overcome itself as the genuine and hostile hindrance to its purpose. Spiritual development is not a harmless and conflict-free process of emergence as in organic life, but rather a hard and obstinate labor directed against itself. In world history there have been several great periods of development that came to an end without apparent continuation. All the accomplishments of culture were destroyed, which made it necessary to start over from the beginning. At the same time there have been enduring developments, fertile and expansive structures and systems of culture. The formal principle of development must regard such retrogressions and progressions as outwardly chance occurrences. Next, the manuscript considers "the stages of development" (M 110–11). These are stages of the principle whose content is the consciousness of freedom, namely, that *one*, *some*, or *all* are free—a matter that has already been discussed.²⁵ Then it turns to "the beginning of world history" (M 111–18), introducing material considered in the previous subsection.²⁶

Finally, the manuscript takes up "the course of development of world history" (M 118–27), which appears to be the beginning of a survey of the course of development apart from the actual treatment of the four major worlds that comprise world history. Hegel's surmised intention was to

²⁵ See p. 39.

²⁶ See pp. 49–50.

devote the entirety of the lectures of 1830–1 to the introduction, that is, to the concept of the philosophy of world history. The manuscript reflects that intention, but the survey breaks off after about twelve manuscript pages, and the lectures themselves revert to the earlier plan of covering all of the *Weltgeschichte*.²⁷

The manuscript's survey begins with material to which reference has already been made, namely, that to understand history as a sequence of stages of freedom, one must be familiar a priori with conceptions concerning "the self-developing shape of freedom."²⁸ It then notes that many people doubt that human beings have become better with the progress of history and culture; the assumption is that morality depends on subjective intentions and opinions, which are similar in all cultures and times. But "world history moves on a higher plane than that to which morality belongs. . . . Whatever is required and accomplished by the final end of spirit (an end that subsists in and for itself), and whatever providence does, transcends the duties, liability, and expectation that attach to individuality by virtue of its ethical life." What world history has to record are the deeds of the *Volksgeist*; and "the individual configurations that these deeds have assumed on the soil of external actuality could well be left to ordinary historians" (M 121). Statements such as these have not endeared Hegel to ordinary historians, but it should be kept in mind that Hegel himself devoted enormous attention to the soil of external actuality as he tracked these deeds (see Ch. 4).

²⁷ As a consequence, the lectures of 1830–1 as transcribed offer only a brief concluding section of the introduction called "the nature and course of world history" (L30–1 43–6), which differs completely from the manuscript. One interesting new theme is introduced, which is anticipated by notations in the Loose Sheets on "The Course of World History" (128–30). Hegel says that *we* see how the peoples are connected *internally*, in accord with the concept, whereas the agents themselves are unaware of it. To them their greatness and influence appear simply as a contingency, an external necessity. Some world-historical peoples entered into external relationships but others did not. Just as the relations of world-historical peoples can be internal ones, so also spirit can remain "underground" (*sous terre*). Hegel remembers Hamlet saying to the paternal spirit that summons him, "To me you are a vicious mole" (*Hamlet*, I. iv. 23–4: "So oft it chances in particular men | That for some vicious mole of nature in them . . ."). "Like a mole, spirit burrows away beneath the earth and completes its work. But where the principle of freedom begins, there comes into play a disturbance, an outward impulse, a production of the object on which spirit works itself to the limit; there an external connection also takes shape."

²⁸ See above, p. 8.

The manuscript continues by summarizing the concept of a political state and the various cultural forms that flourish under it—laws, sciences, poetry, art, religion, philosophy (see Ch. 3). With respect to philosophy, Hegel says that it is the thinking of thinking and has a deconstructive task:

The reflective understanding (*reflectirende Verstand*) attacks all those sacred and profound elements that were naively introduced into the religion, laws, and customs of peoples, and debases and dilutes them into abstract and godless generalities. Thought is then impelled to become thinking reason (*denkende Vernunft*), and to seek and accomplish in its own element the undoing of the destruction that it brought upon itself. (M 123)

Such a statement indicates that Hegel's intention is to recover the truth of religion and other intuitions of the absolute in the form of a "second naïveté"²⁹ accomplished by thinking reason. The literal reading is destroyed even as the speculative depth is grasped in what can rightly be described as a "mystical vision." Hegel's logic is one form of such a vision, a rational mysticism. Reason grasps or holds together what is destroyed by the understanding, disclosing the "mystery" that is hidden to the understanding. In this way, an advancing culture retrieves what it has inherited from the past instead of either discarding the inheritance (secularism and atheism) or clinging to the naive expression (literalism, fundamentalism). When the only alternatives are secularism and fundamentalism, as seems increasingly to be the case in our own culture, spirit has ossified.

The manuscript ends abruptly in the midst of a discussion of various parallels and differences between Oriental and Western thought (M 124–6). They share an interest in oneness or unity, but the comparison "overlooks the one factor on which everything depends, the determinacy of the unity in question, whether the unity is to be understood in an abstract or in a concrete sense—concrete to the point of being unity in itself, which is spirit." Hegel's *Weltgeschichte* can be read as the story of the quest for a more concrete and determinate unity—a unity that appears in the shapes of love and freedom.

²⁹ On second naïveté, see Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1967), 351–2.

The End of History

I address the question of the end of history in two ways: first, here, in the context of world history as the development of spirit; then in Chapter 5, in a theological context as “the kingdom of freedom.” The two discussions overlap because it is clear that Hegel regards the question of the “final end” as both a historical and a theological question. The source must be the lectures of 1822–3 because the manuscript of 1830 breaks off before it arrives at this topic in its treatment of the course of world history.

The question is historical because the succession of stages that constitute history cannot be a progression into infinity. “If only new principles constantly emerged, world history would have no purpose leading to a goal; no end would ever be in sight.” Historical process must have a beginning, a middle (a progression), and a goal (a final end) (L 166–7). But the question is theological because the answer is expressed in a religious and theological framework, not a historical one. The end is not a historical utopia or a determinate state of historical affairs (such as the achievement of free democratic states around the world). Philosophy would be remiss if out of timidity it failed to take into account religious intuitions—precisely the sort of timidity exhibited by a multitude of modern philosophers. The religious final end, says Hegel, is “that human beings should attain eternal peace, that they should be sanctified.” This is indeed the proper aim as concerns the individual, but if this is all there is to it, “one might have the impression that the eternal goal has nothing to do with us *here*, where we are in the world, because it is a future, otherworldly end, something ‘over there.’ But then this world, what is this-worldly, is still the place of preparation and attainment, and so this world must furnish the basic orientation for all works.” What happens in the world on the way to the goal is no mere *means* to salvation “but directly the absolute thing—that-history-is—about itself (*die absolute Sache selbst*), the absolute history in which individuals are only single moments” (L 167).

What is the absolute thing that history is about? Again, the answer can only be expressed theologically (more precisely, ontotheologically).

The purpose of spiritual activity is the glorification and honor of God. Here the matter is comprehended in religious terms. This is in fact the worthy aim of spirit and history. . . . We found spirit to be what produces itself, makes itself into and grasps itself as object. Only then is it result, and what is brought forth and self-produced. . . . To grasp itself. . . does not mean merely to have information about

arbitrary, optional, and transient matters; rather it essentially means to grasp the true being, the absolute itself. Spirit's absolute is the absolute of everything, the divine being. Spirit's purpose, its absolute drive, is thus to gain a consciousness of this being such that it is known as the one and only actual and true being through which everything happens and proceeds—to know that everything must be arranged, and is actually arranged, in accord with it, and therefore that it is the power that guided and guides the course of world history, the power that rules and has ruled it. The recognition of this in these deeds and works is what religion rightly expresses by giving God the honor and glory, or by glorifying and exalting the truth. This exaltation of the truth is to be understood as the absolute final end, and this truth is the sole power that brings forth and completes this exaltation. The individual spirit has its glory in glorifying God. This is not its particular honor; rather its honor comes from knowing that its self-feeling is the substantial consciousness of God, that its action is to the honor and glory of God, of the absolute. In this knowledge the individual spirit has attained its truth and freedom; . . . here it is at home not with another but with itself, with its essence, not with something contingent but rather in absolute freedom. This, accordingly would be the final end of world history. (L 168)

To recognize the honor and glory of God is not simply an epistemological act; it is also an ontological act of participation in the being and truth of God such that one's self-feeling is the substantial consciousness of God, God's self-consciousness. God's "glory" is simply the radiance of God's own being, its shining essence. Here spirit is at home not with something alien but with its own essence. This is the ultimate meaning of freedom and the final end of world history. This end is attained repeatedly in history by both individuals and spiritual communities. It is a "mystical" moment, but it has practical applications. The mystic is driven beyond him- or herself into the world to transform it by means of the actualization of freedom in ever-new but always fragmentary situations. The eschatological status is one of "already" and "not yet," and humans live in the tensive space between them. Hegel does not look to a chronological or supernatural future for the consummation of history; it is happening here and now but is never fully attained. The way to the goal is no mere means but the goal itself, the thing that history is about.

One might regret that Hegel does not say more about the final end; perhaps he would have had more to say if the manuscript of 1830 had been completed. He himself acknowledges that finding the balance between a too brief and a too expansive treatment is not easy. "Thus we can give here only a general representation; history itself provides the details" (L 167).

Hegel's general orientation is clear enough, but the reader must find the details in the history.

Burleigh Taylor Wilkins notes that Hegel was the last great philosopher of history to believe that the question about the ultimate purpose of the world was intelligible and that it could be answered. Nonphilosophical historians do sometimes ask questions about the purpose of particular figures or institutions, but the question of ultimate purpose is qualitatively different. In his discussion of teleology, Hegel emphasizes that it is not *external* but *internal* design that is at stake when considering ultimate purpose—not an extramundane but an intramundane intelligence; and God is such an intelligence. God is *in* the world, but the world is also *in* God; thus God is neither a creature of the world nor a supreme being outside it but rather infinite creative power. While acknowledging that Hegel's teleology has theological implications, Wilkins chooses not to pursue the latter because he says that if one grasps the philosophical significance of history for Hegel one grasps the religious significance as well. Wilkins pursues the philosophical significance in terms of the categories of the logic, examining specifically how mechanism is sublated in teleology.³⁰ However, the logical categories all have theological equivalents, and in the *Weltgeschichte* it is principally theology, or theo-logic, that is evoked, not pure logic. This is not because of Hegel's desire to be "popular," as some critics have claimed, but because the terrain of history is *real life*, where the absolute appears as God. In fact, the intuition of God is what is original, and only later did philosophers advance theories to explain it.

Walter Jaeschke considers the question of the end or goal of history in the following way. The goal toward which world history as a whole is oriented, as well as the partial histories of art, religion, and philosophy, is the actualization of freedom. Christian theology and modern philosophy conceptualize this goal in a form that is consummate. But the *concept* is different from history itself. If the goal of world history lies not in the *cognition* of the concept but in the *actualization* of freedom, the period of world history that starts with the end of the history of philosophy has a specific content of its own, namely the actualization of what has now been

³⁰ Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 54–9 incl. n. 23; and ch. 2, "Mechanism and Teleology." See the treatment of teleology in *The Science of Logic*, 735–54; and *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, §§ 204–12 (pp. 279–86).

adequately cognized. At this point, the relationship between philosophy and actuality reverses. Rather than always trailing after actuality, philosophical thinking now precedes actuality; and the character of world history after the end of philosophy is not the *cognition* of the principle of freedom but its *actualization*. The history of the praxis of freedom begins with the end of the histories of art, religion, and philosophy; and the history of praxis is unending. So on Jaeschke's view the end of history is attained conceptually but not practically.³¹

This interpretation reflects a Feuerbachian reading of Hegel, and its true insight is that the history of praxis is unending. But is it correct to say that the histories of art, religion, and philosophy have come to an end? In fact, the history of conceptualization continues too, now enriched by global perspectives and natural science; and it is the interplay between theory and practice that produces both genuine advances and tragic distortions in the human condition. The criterion by which *we* test the advances and distortions may remain that of the glory of God as it shines in human flourishing (and suffers in human deprivation), but today we have to acknowledge that this is a culturally relative criterion. Its relativity does not cancel its truth, for we can know the absolute only relatively.

What would Hegel say about historical relativity? Ulrich Thiele puts forth an interesting argument, centering around the idea that September 11, 2001, represents a "world-historical caesura" that fractures the simplistic theses of both Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntingdon. Fukuyama's thesis, claiming Hegel in support, is that the battle of ideas is over and that secular liberal democracy, having won the debate, will sweep across the world. Huntington's opposing thesis is that of an unavoidable clash of civilizations because of incompatible worldviews (Eastern versus Western, Muslim versus Christian, authoritarian versus democratic). Both theses are ideological simplifications of arguments that can be traced to Hegel's philosophy of world history; however, in the *Weltgeschichte*, claims Thiele, the ideas are *mediated* with each other. Hegel does indeed sketch the outlines of a universal theory of the state and a universal world history. But it is not clear whether or in what manner Hegel advances the thesis of a global unification of cultures. Does he anticipate a homogenization of

³¹ Walter Jaeschke, "World History and the History of Absolute Spirit," in *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 114–15.

political systems or only a partial approximation? On the one hand he acknowledges that Asian, Islamic, and Christian cultures continue to stand “perennially alongside each other in space” (L 156–7); but on the other hand, in a different context, he asserts that Christianity has “circumnavigated the globe and dominates it” (L 464). (Today such an assertion is made not about Christianity but its secular offspring, Western democracy.) Thus it is uncertain whether Hegel’s philosophy of world history postulates a globalization of cultures and governments or the reverse, the perennial incompatibility of certain religio-ethical shapes.³² Perhaps a third option is conceivable: neither homogenization nor incompatibility but collaboration within a framework of overlapping values that enable conversation and promote human freedom and dignity. Shapes of freedom do not coalesce into a single shape, but they are nonetheless shapes of *freedom*. Cooperation among the shapes could produce new religious and philosophical theories and new global practices. But whether it will happen is uncertain: prediction is not the business of history or philosophy.

This chapter has established that the progress of the consciousness of freedom is the central theme of history. The actualization of freedom occurs synchronically in *the state*, diachronically in *the course of world history*, and surchronically in *the kingdom of freedom*. These dimensions overlap like a palimpsest (they are “analytic” distinctions), and they constitute the topics of the next three chapters.³³

³² See Ulrich Thiele, *Verfassung, Volksgeist und Religion: Hegels Überlegungen zur Weltgeschichte des Staatsrechts* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2008), 9–13.

³³ After completion of the manuscript of this book, Steven Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011) was published. Pinker provides a verification, from a social-scientific perspective, of Hegel’s conviction that history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom. Pinker shows, from a large-scale study of human cultures over several millennia, that violence has declined dramatically; and that even in the twentieth century, with its two world wars and mass genocide, the emergence in the second half of the century of the human rights movements, the empowerment of women, the global village, and similar phenomena has had a significant positive impact. The decline of violence is not the same as the progress of freedom, but a correlation exists between them. Indeed, Pinker argues that moral growth is a key to the process, which he attributes to the pacifying influence of states, changes in attitudes toward murder and revenge, the decline of superstition and prejudice, and the role of reason in human behavior. He explains moral growth in terms of evolutionary and psychological factors rather than philosophical and religious ones. (From his point of view, religion is a part of the problem rather than a solution to it.) And because reason can be used as an instrument of our “inner demons” as well as of our “better angels,” Pinker believes that humanity has a good chance, but no more than a good chance, of avoiding a future clash of civilizations or a new escalation of violence. Constant vigilance is required.

3

The State and the Actualization of Freedom

The Concept of the State

The state is the “material” (*Material*) of spirit’s actualization as distinguished from its “means” (*Mittel*), the interweaving of passions and ideals (M 100). What kind of material is it? Obviously it is not principally natural material, or matter, although the state does find its substrate in the natural world, and it does entail the shaping of the natural world to human ends. It must be spiritual material, the material in which the “means” operate, but that statement says very little. It is spirit in its social manifestation as *Volksgeist*, which in turn makes it possible for there to be individual spirits, *Geister*, free and self-conscious. In the philosophy of world history, the Jews are depicted as a people without a state—the most miserable of conditions, which, despite their exalted concept of God, accounts for their ongoing subjugation (L 332–3).¹ “State” refers to the whole complex of things that constitute human social, ethical, and political life, namely, law, morality, family, civil society, culture, and the institutions of government. It provides the objective basis for the higher forms of spirit: art, religion, and philosophy. The word “state” often has a narrower and sometimes sinister connotation referring to the authority of government, an alien power, a “they”; but for Hegel the state is “we,” indeed “we the people,” the “spirit of a people” bound together in mutual recognition and obligation; it forms a distinctive corporate entity, a *polis*. In *The Philosophy of Right* the state is treated at length as the third and final section of

¹ See also *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 158–9, 182–205; and Shlomo Avineri, “The Fossil and the Phoenix: Hegel and Krochmal on the Jewish *Volksgeist*,” in *History and System: Hegel’s Philosophy of History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 47–63, esp. 49–50.

“ethical life,”² which includes also the family and civil society, and which is preceded by “abstract right” and “morality.” As the final section, the state subsumes all the preceding sections. It is both the culmination of “objective spirit” and the objective matrix in which the forms of absolute spirit appear. At this fulcrum in Hegel’s system, the discipline of history is engaged, for history is about states.

The following discussion is limited to what Hegel says about the state in the philosophy of world history. He addresses it as the third main section of the introduction in the lectures of 1822–3, “the nature of the state” (L 177–205), and as an aspect of “the actualization of spirit in history” in the manuscript of 1830 (M 100–7) and the lectures of 1830–1 (L₃₀₋₁ 28–43). In both 1822–3 and 1830–1, the discussion is divided into sections on the concept of the state and on the “constitution” or political organization of the state. In 1822–3, two additional topics are addressed: the relationship of the state to the productions of spirit (religion, art, philosophy, culture) and to nature (geography). In the last lectures, geography appears to be treated as an addendum to the introduction, not as an integral component of the state itself. In any event, four topics are addressed in this chapter: the concept of the state, the constitution, the state and spirit, and the state and nature.

Hegel begins in 1822–3 by stating that ethical life is the “midpoint” at which the idea of freedom and human passions join together; and the state in turn is the “midpoint” of ethical life into which its other concrete aspects are subsumed, such as law, customs, the conveniences of life, and the practices of spirit. He notes that the topic of the state has been fully examined in the philosophy of right, and that in the present lectures he must for the most part presuppose this treatment and only summarize the results (L 177).

Concerning the nature of the state, it should be represented as follows: that in it freedom becomes objective to itself, that in it freedom is realized in a positive [i.e. historical] fashion—in contrast to the representation that the state is a collection of human beings in which the freedom of all is limited, and that therefore the state is the negation of freedom in such a way that for individuals only a small area remains free. . . . However, the state is freedom in its objectivity; and the constrained space within which people have . . . known freedom is only arbitrary choice or free will

² *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §§ 257–360 (pp. 275–380).

(*Willkür*), thus the opposite of freedom. Therefore the way in which philosophy comprehends the state is that the state is the actualization of freedom. This is its principal definition. (L 177–8)

Hegel quotes Aristotle to the effect that the human being “is by nature a political animal,”³ and he adds that rationality, indeed the very being of human beings, is also dependent on the state. The state is the consequence of the objective work of a people.

It is erroneous to regard the state as merely a *means* for the satisfaction of individual ends; “for the state *is* the end or purpose, and individuals have meaning only to the extent that they enact within themselves the substantiality of the people.” This substantiality is the people’s “objective essence” (*die Sache*), and in this *Sache* the subjective will of individuals is united with what is universal in and for itself. “Individuals owe everything that they are to the state; only in the state do they have their essential being. The state is the ethical whole; it is not an abstraction that stands over against the individual” (L 178). As if there were any doubt about his position, Hegel adds:

The state does not exist for the sake of its citizens; rather it is the end in and for itself, not a means for individuals, who are elements of it. It is not the case that individuals are the end and the state the means. The relationship of end and means is not appropriate; for the state is not an abstraction that stands over against the citizens; rather they are the essential element, the consciousness of the whole itself. In an organism everything is end and means simultaneously; in it no member is an end and none is a means. Thus the state is the idea as it is present on earth. (L 178–9)

The state, then, is a social organism in which the distinction between parts and whole is both annulled and preserved. As such it is the idea as it is present on earth because the idea too expresses the unity of whole and parts. Hegel elaborates by comparing the state with the family relationship; indeed states arise in part out of the association of families. The family is likewise an ethical whole,

but in it love as such is the modality by which spirit and unity are present. Each family member is aware of being a member of the whole through love. The labor and goals of each are not independent, for their own sake, but rather exist for the family as a whole, and this whole takes precedence over one’s own particularity. (L 179)

In other words, true individuality cannot emerge in the family relationship, where the bond of love takes precedence over the development of a

³ Aristotle, *Politics* 1253^a.

personal identity. The family or tribal unit is supreme, and the very concept of an individual identity is absent.

The latter can develop only in the state, where the bond is one of *citizenship* rather than of love per se (love is present in subsumed form). Citizenship requires that laws replace sentiment, and these laws are the universal in the form of knowing. In obeying the laws individuals know that they have their freedom, for the laws are rational.

Thus in the laws individuals are related to their own being, their own will. . . . Thus the independence of individuals is found in the state; for they are knowing individuals, and knowing constitutes the being-for-self of individuals, i.e., it posits their 'I' vis-à-vis the universal. Here, therefore, personal identity (*Persönlichkeit*) enters into play. (L 179)

Everything else that Hegel says about the state follows from these fundamental definitions. Religion, art, science, and culture can emerge only in the state because they too are the product of thinking. Thinking and knowing the universal become actual for the first time in the state. Thinking and knowing the universal are precisely how the master-slave relationship is overthrown and replaced by a condition of mutual recognition and respect. In mutual recognition, there is a renunciation of the particular will and the creation of an intersubjective will. My freedom depends on the freedom of the other; it is only when *we* are free together that freedom reigns. The sociopolitical organism in which this happens is the state (L 180–1).

Hegel's profoundly intersubjective or communitarian concept of the state stands in stark contrast to contractarian views that regard the state as a limitation on individual liberty. In extreme form, such views underlie the attack of certain conservatives on the very institutions of government, regarding them as evil or unnecessary. From Hegel's perspective, such views are extremely dangerous and can only end in a condition of anarchy in which each individual has to fend for him- or herself, armed with weapons. Rather than the highest liberty, such a condition is the highest unfreedom, a return to the state of nature. Contractarians do not grasp Hegel's deepest insight, that individual freedom is maximized together with social freedom because freedom itself is intersubjective. This is liberalism as it has come to be understood today.

Michael Rosen points out that classical liberalism placed its emphasis on individual rights, duties, and voluntarism, whereas Hegel's position is

closer to what he calls “republicanism,” which is communitarian and stresses the primacy of ethical life. Today classical liberalism is closer to (neo)conservative “libertarianism,” and liberalism has been redefined to mean the social welfare state. According to Rosen, the distinction between classical liberalism and republicanism is replayed in the debate between John Rawls and Michael Sandel. The idea that liberalism seeks to establish its values on an abstract and impoverished conception of the self can be traced to Hegel’s critique of the ideological foundations of the French Revolution in the ideas of Rousseau and Kant. For Hegel as for Sandel, the weakness of the liberal conception of the self is that it is essentially voluntaristic, an abstract subject of choice, for whom the only genuine obligations are self-assumed. For both Hegel and Sandel, this kind of liberalism is a destructive, ultimately self-undermining system. While Rosen disagrees with the diagnosis of the voluntaristic roots of liberalism, he does agree that to the extent that the institutions of public life are regarded as no more than means for the realization of individuals’ private ends, they will lose the power to fulfill even that limited function.⁴

Hegel’s concept of the state as articulated in the manuscript of 1830 differs only slightly from the lectures of 1822–3. He does, however, express more clearly the connection between the state and religion. What he seems to say is that the intersubjectivity of freedom must have a trans-subjective or depth dimension that recognizes the “essential being” of humanity to be that of divinity. Thus it is “foolish . . . to devise and implement political institutions independently of religion.” The proper recognition of the interdependence of state and religion “resides in the inwardness of the Protestant principle,” which acknowledges “the *inherent* and substantial existence of right and ethical life. . . . If the state’s legal principles and institutions are divorced from inwardness, from the ultimate

⁴ Michael Rosen, “Liberalism, Republicanism and the Public Philosophy of American Democracy,” in *Die Weltgeschichte—das Weltgericht? Stuttgarter Hegel Kongreß 1999*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner and Walter Mesch (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), 261–79. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, rev. edn. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); and Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 2nd edn. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and *Democracy’s Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). Sandel has become renowned through a televised series of his class on justice at Harvard. His most recent book is related to that class: *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009); see esp. ch. 10, “Justice and the Common Good,” where he argues that a true liberalism cannot be value-neutral but is committed to judgments about the human social good.

shrine of conscience—the silent sanctuary where religion has its seat—they will not become actually central [to life] but will remain abstract and nonspecific” (M 101–2). Hegel does not elaborate here more fully on what he means. It could be that the shrine of conscience serves as a counterweight to authoritarian claims on behalf of the state and to libertarian claims on behalf of individuals. A break occurs at this point in the manuscript (M 102 n. 59), which is partially filled by the lectures as transcribed. There Hegel says that in religion (the consciousness of absolute spirit) the human will renounces its particular interest, laying it aside in devotion, in the sacrificial offering of the cultus, where individuals relinquish their possessions, their will, their particular sensibilities (L_{30–1} 26). Hence claims of radical autonomy are set aside. In addition, the laws of ethical life are not contingent but rational in themselves because they are “the divine aspect in the external object of history” (L_{30–1} 27). The divine aspect could be viewed as a criterion that relativizes the heteronomous authority of the state. Theonomy overcomes the distortions inherent in autonomy and heteronomy; the latter in turn prevent theonomy from becoming an abstract and potentially dehumanizing transcendence. Paul Tillich says that “theonomous culture is spirit-determined and spirit-directed culture, and spirit fulfils spirit instead of breaking it. The idea of theonomy is not antihumanistic, but it turns the humanistic indefiniteness about the ‘where-to’ into a direction which transcends every particular human aim.”⁵ I return to these thoughts shortly.

The manuscript of 1830 continues by enumerating three misconceptions about the nature of the state. The first is that humans are free by nature, but that in society and the state this natural freedom must be restricted. Such a claim is counterfactual, for in nature we find savagery, raw passions, and violent deeds. “Freedom as the ideality of the immediate and natural does not exist as something immediate and natural but must rather first be acquired and attained through the endless mediation of discipline acting upon knowledge and will.” To attribute the drives, desires, and passions of individuals to freedom is then to take the restriction of any of these as a restriction of freedom. “On the contrary, such a restriction is the absolute condition from which liberation proceeds, and society and the state instead provide the condition in which freedom is actualized” (M 102–3).

⁵ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), iii. 250; cf. 249–65.

The second and third misconceptions are related and involve confusing the state with a patriarchal relationship or a family relationship. Patriarchy is based on the family relationship, but it is “a transitional form in which the family has already grown into a clan or people, and in which the bond has already ceased to be one simply of love and trust and has become an association of *service*” (M 103–4). The ties of blood relationship are transcended in the patriarchal unit, but service is not yet citizenship, which is attained only relatively late in the development of political institutions.

The lectures of 1830–1 introduce another misconception, which they call the “third” because patriarchy and family are combined into the second. This is the so-called “collective fallacy” (*die Allheit*), which claims that *all* individuals must give their consent to the regulations of the state if they are to have the force of law. However, if this sort of radical democracy is required, the state founders, for all people do not agree on anything. In fact, “the people” as such lacks the wisdom to make laws and a suitable constitution; these tasks must be assumed by or delegated to those with the requisite knowledge (L30-1 37–8).

Before addressing the constitution, to which these last remarks are a prelude, I summarize Alan Patten’s analysis of Hegel’s concept of the state, which he describes as “communitarian” in contrast to “contractarian.”⁶ In brief: the state is not a limitation of freedom, as claimed by social contract theories; rather a kind of freedom is realized in the state that could not be enjoyed outside it. Patten defends this view, although he says there are questionable aspects of Hegel’s philosophy of the state that show up mostly in his analysis of the constitution. Hegel’s concept of the state accords with what Patten calls a “civic humanist idea of freedom,” which means that the state can be understood without reliance on (but also without contradicting) the idea that God is the agent of or the provider of content for freedom.

Patten’s analysis is based on a close reading of the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel draws a distinction between “civil society” (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) and the state. Civil society is the domain in which the “particular” is the end and object, while the state is the domain in which the “universal” is the end and object. In civil society, individuals pursue their own ends; in the state, they pursue the ends of the community of recognition. The mechanism of civil society is similar to that of a market economy in which

⁶ Alan Patten, *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), chs. 4, 6, 7.

each individual, by fulfilling his own needs and desires, also serves the needs of others. By an “invisible hand,” individuals are forced to provide benefits for others if they are to obtain benefits for themselves.⁷ In this way, they achieve a more universal kind of good as well as recognition and respect. The state, however, “is the sphere in which individuals directly, explicitly, and intentionally work for the good of others, for the whole community, and seek to preserve and promote a community of mutual recognition in which all can develop and sustain their free and rational faculties.”⁸ The contractarian view makes the state part of civil society; the communitarian view, just the reverse.⁹ The state resolves the contradictions and tensions inherent in the institutional structures of civil society. An alignment must be brought about between the goals, values, and convictions of individuals and those of the social order. This alignment is accomplished not by coercion but by the effective working of the central institutions of the state—the sovereign, executive, and legislative powers—along with the manifestations of spirit in the laws, art, religion, philosophy, and culture of society as a whole. The state requires and engenders a community of mutual recognition.

The question that Patten has to face, and that Hegel does face, concerns the *criterion* of the community of recognition. Why does it represent the *ultimate value* of the state? Can its authority be established by a purely humanistic reading? Other kinds of humanism could argue that what drives politics is at best a pragmatic altruism that has at its basis self-interest. Disinterested recognition, affirmation of the freedom of all human beings as such, are utopian goals unless they are grounded in the ultimate structure of reality itself. Patten’s concluding words are:

At this point, I think that Hegel *would* fall back on a story about God’s self-realization through the historical process. Human freedom and subjectivity are

⁷ The “cunning of reason” operates by means of a similar invisible hand, but in the case of reason it is the hand of providence rather than of market forces. The metaphor of the invisible hand originated with Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations*, 1776).

⁸ Patten, *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom*, 174. Patten quotes (194) Hegel’s well-known statement in the *Philosophy of Right*, § 260 (p. 282): “The principle of modern states has enormous strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to attain fulfilment in the *self-sufficient extreme* of personal particularity, while at the same time *bringing it back to substantial unity* and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself.”

⁹ Z. A. Pelczynski criticizes Hegel principally on this ground. See his essay on “The Hegelian Conception of the State” in the collection he has edited, *Hegel’s Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 1–29.

the correct ideals for thinking about social and political questions ultimately because God wants, or even needs, to be freely known and worshipped. To this extent, the civic humanist reading defended in this study cannot stand entirely on its own. For us today, of course, it seems hard to accept such a metaphysical story at its face value. But, in sensing the need for such a story, Hegel can at least claim to have identified a problem that is no less relevant today than it was in Hegel's own time.¹⁰

Such a statement by a fair and knowledgeable interpreter indicates the importance of a theological perspective on Hegel's conception of ethical life and the state. It is not so much a matter, in my view, of God's wanting to be freely known and worshiped as it is of God's creating a community of mutual recognition in the image of God's own being: it has the shape of a community of the spirit, a *Reich der Freiheit*, which is the goal of history. God does this because God is the One who *is* freedom (*das Freie*), the One who loves in freedom. I return to this matter in Chapter 5.

The Constitution

In the lectures of 1822–3, the constitution comprises the first of the three sections in which Hegel explores aspects of the state as the actualization of freedom: its interior structure (the constitution), its relationship to the spiritual and cultural world (in both infinite and finite aspects), and its relationship to the physical or natural world (geography) (L 181 n. 43). These relationships are constitutive of the totality of the state.

The constitution (*Verfassung*) refers not simply to a written document but to the institutional workings of a government. The best state is the one in which the greatest degree of freedom prevails, because the state is the actualization of freedom. But where is such freedom to be found? What constitutes its reality? The first proposal is to represent freedom as subjective will, as “free will” (*Willkür*), but Hegel has already set this representation aside on the grounds that the state is precisely the unity of subjective and universal will. If we start with the assumption of an opposition between the government and the people, then both sides must be limited. This is a very common assumption, but Hegel writes:

¹⁰ Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*, 204. Earlier Patten acknowledges that metaphysical, historicist, and humanist readings all capture aspects of Hegel's position and are not mutually incompatible (9–10).

There is something malignant in the opposition between the people and the government. As long as this opposition endures, there is not yet in fact a state, and what is at stake is the very existence of the state. . . . In the state this opposition must have disappeared. . . . The state has as its very foundation the unity of these aspects. This unity is its being as such, its substance. . . . As a living entity, the state is to be thought of essentially . . . as an organic system consisting in spheres or particular universalities that are independent on their own account, but only in such a way that the independent operation produces this whole, that is, sublates their independence. In the organism it is absolutely no longer a question of the opposition between universal and singular. (L 181–2)

The organic holism of the state is critical to understanding its substantial being as a community of recognition. The constitution simply gives specific form to the organism.

Hegel distinguishes among three constitutional forms. The first is the one in which the “totality is still enveloped” and the component spheres have not yet arrived at their independence or autonomy. The second is the form in which the spheres become free. “The first form is compulsory unity; the second is a loose unity of liberated spheres in which the unity is a secondary factor. Finally, the third form is the one in which the spheres, subsisting independently, find their efficacy only in the production of the universal” (L 182–3). Hegel associates these forms with specific types of constitution, remarking that “all states, all realms, pass through these forms, and the whole of world history can be divided according to these forms.” The first type is that of a *patriarchal kingdom* in which a single monarch rules with absolute power, and the unity is still compulsory. Then the particularity of the second type comes into play in the form of *aristocracy* or *democracy*, depending on whether a particular group rules or the citizens as a whole. Even in democracy “an accidental aristocracy crystallizes, based on talent or some other contingency. This makes a transition to a *second kind* of kingship, a *monarchy*, which is finally the ultimate and true form of the state” (italics mine). These types of constitution are associated with the four “worlds” that comprise world history: the Oriental empires, the Greek and Roman empires, and the modern European or Germanic World; the latter portrays “the [second] monarchical constitution, where the particular spheres become free without endangering the whole, where instead the very activity of the particular produces the whole.” The “second monarchy” is a constitutional monarchy in which the powers of the monarch are no longer absolute but limited in very specific ways. In Hegel’s view this is the ultimate form of the state because it embodies the

idea of the state, "which grants freedom to its different elements, brings them into prominence, and takes them back into its unity." The constitutions succeed each other in history "in such a way that the earlier principles are sublated in the later ones" (L 182–4).

The manuscript of 1830 offers a very similar analysis. "The foremost feature is the distinction between ruler and ruled, and constitutions have rightly been classified on the whole as monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy." With this classification a distinction must be made between "despotism and monarchy proper"; only the latter (constitutional monarchy) is in the running for serious consideration as to which is the *best* constitution (M 105–6). Hegel decides as follows:

The fundamental but abstractly formulated definition of freedom has led to the widespread theory that the *republic* is the only just and true constitution. Indeed, a number of men who have held high positions in a *monarchical* form of government, for example Lafayette, have not contradicted such a view or have subscribed to it. But they have seen that such a constitution, even though it may be the best, in actuality cannot be introduced everywhere, and that, because *humans are what they are*, one must make do with a lesser degree of freedom. As a consequence, under these circumstances and in light of the moral condition of the people, the monarchical constitution may be the *most workable one*. (M 106–7)

Thus the decision is based on pragmatic as well as theoretical considerations. Given the weaknesses of human nature, Hegel was suspicious of any form of pure democracy in which people represent themselves directly in assemblies. Here competing self-interests are likely to overwhelm genuine accomplishments, factions are likely to gain control, and in close votes the decision will appear arbitrary. In any event, such democracies can work only in small states with an educated citizenry (dependent on a subjugated working class), like those of ancient Greece.¹¹ Hegel includes instead a democratic element in his monarchical constitution.¹²

A description of the elements of a constitutional monarchy is not found in the philosophy of world history lectures. We must turn instead to the

¹¹ See the discussion below of the Greek World. Greek democracy is treated in L 399–404, 408–9, 419.

¹² The lectures of 1830–1 add that the state is essentially linked to art, religion, and philosophy, or to culture as such, but this link is not developed further. They also note that "additional essential elements yet to be introduced are its climate, its neighbors, its general position in the world, and so forth" (L30–1 42). These elements in 1830–1 are treated as an addendum rather than as an integral part of its analysis of the state.

philosophy of right. In broad essentials, Hegel offers a division or balance of power between the office of the sovereign, the executive branch, the legislative assembly, the administration of justice, and the police or public authority. The legislative assembly is an “estates assembly” (*Ständeverammlung*) where in the lower house various “estates” or classes have delegates. Individuals join “corporations” that represent diverse vocational and professional interests, and the delegates are selected by corporations rather than by popular vote. The executive branch has enormous administrative powers, while the sovereign has virtually none other than to symbolize the unity and subjectivity of the people and to appoint bureaucrats. Thus the balance of power is shifted in favor of an administrative apparatus and an assembly where citizens are represented not individually but through their social standing.¹³

There is much to be appreciated in this arrangement, and much to be criticized. Rudolf Siebert argues that Hegel was personally engaged in a number of very practical liberal projects, which at the time were highly progressive. He demanded the equality of all citizens before the law and the emancipation of the Jews. He advocated a jury system and the participation of all persons with voting rights (but not universal suffrage) in the legislative process. He defended the principle of erotic love before and in marriage (as opposed to arranged marriages). He did not promote unlimited state power; his ideal was not the Prussian absolutism of 1820 but rather the constitutional monarchy of the British system. His goal was a Periclean city-state without slaves, a free state of free persons. Opposition to his thought from the right built up before and after his death, and he died with a sense of foreboding about the political future.¹⁴

¹³ See *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right* (Heidelberg, 1817–1818), ed. by the Staff of the Hegel Archives with an introduction by Otto Pöggeler, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), §§ 109–58 (pp. 189–296); and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §§ 209–56, 275–320 (pp. 240–74, 313–59). For an analysis, see Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), esp. chs. 7–9. On the political circumstances surrounding publication of the *Philosophy of Right*, see Allen W. Wood, “Hegel's Political Philosophy,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 298–300. Wood describes Hegel's position as moderately progressive in its context.

¹⁴ Rudolf J. Siebert, *Hegel's Philosophy of History: Theological, Humanistic, and Scientific Elements* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 18–21.

Alan Patten points to both advantages and shortcomings. Hegel's constitution articulates the state into different tasks and functions so that it takes on the character of an organism that continually produces and preserves itself. The three main powers, the sovereign, the executive, and the legislative, interact in various ways to avoid destabilization. To assure stability, he favors a hereditary principle based on primogeniture to determine the succession in the monarchy, a highly trained civil service, and elections held in individual corporations rather than by direct vote for candidates. Although the powers are balanced to some degree, the system is biased in favor of stability.

The state as characterized by Hegel has too weak and unrepresentative a legislature, too enclosed and powerful a bureaucracy, and allows too limited a role for public opinion, to be considered the full actualization of freedom. One need not accept all of Marx's criticisms of Hegel to agree with him that the Hegelian state seems better designed to promote the powerful and entrenched interests of civil society than the freedom of ordinary citizens, let alone of the poor and dispossessed. And one need not be a contractarian to think that what is missing in the Hegelian state is precisely the participatory, Rousseauian democratic mechanisms that Hegel explicitly repudiates.¹⁵

It is ironic that North American and Western European democracies, which presumably have more of the Rousseauian inheritance, have nonetheless been largely co-opted by the "powerful and entrenched interests of civil society," which use their power to promote their own interests rather than those of the poor and dispossessed. Especially in the United States, the availability of enormous private wealth to influence elections and the advocacy of a fundamentally flawed view of the state as a beast that must be starved, have eroded the democratic process in ways that Hegel's organic view might have better protected.

The State and Spirit: Religion, Art, Philosophy, Culture

After treating the constitution, the lectures of 1822–3 identify three aspects of the state: an infinite content (religion, art, philosophy), a finite content as it relates to needs (culture, empirical sciences), and a natural aspect

¹⁵ Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*, 200; cf. 188–90.

(geography). These three aspects comprise a “rich chapter” (L 184–5). However, in the lectures of 1830–1, only geography is discussed in detail.

Religion, Art, Philosophy. Consciousness must know both the being-in-and-for-itself of spirit (absolute spirit) and its unity with the individual. The center point of this knowledge is *religion*; indeed, “art and science [philosophy] can be viewed as forms and aspects of religion.” Religion, art, and philosophy have essentially the same content but express it in different forms: representation, intuition, and thought. In relationship to the state, religion is the central form of consciousness because the essence of the state, like religion itself, is to achieve a unification of universal and subjective will. Here, says Hegel, “we can adduce only the chief elements that are involved in religion, those that can be demonstrated by philosophy alone” (L 185).

Hegel begins by claiming that “the human being is infinite in cognizing, limited in willing”—just the opposite of Kant’s critique of the limits of theoretical reason (L 185–6 incl. n. 49).¹⁶ Intelligence alone liberates the will from its limitations. Essential being is to be thought of as *universal power*. When this power is imagined to be the “lord” of nature and the spiritual world, it is reflected into itself and invested with qualities of subjectivity or personality. Then “the universal spirit is essentially present as human consciousness.” It becomes subsisting spirit (*seiende Geist*)¹⁷ as well as universal spirit. This leads Hegel to the following definition of religion:

The divine idea . . . is the unity of the universal and the subsisting spirit. Abstractly, this means nothing other than that spirit must be apprehended as the unity of finitude and infinitude; when the two are separated, the understanding’s version of infinity prevails. In another form this is the mystery that the Christian religion has disclosed and revealed, namely, that God is the unity of human and divine nature.

¹⁶ On “overcoming the Kantian frame,” see Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press), part 3.

¹⁷ *Seiend(e)* is an adjective formed from *sein*, and it means what subsists or has being; it is the determinate “there” of being (*Dasein*). Here is the German text: “Der allgemeine Geist ist wesentlich vorhanden als menschliches Bewußtsein. Der Mensch ist dieses Dasein und Fürsichsein des Wissens. Wir haben also jetzt [einen] allgemeinen Geist als sich wissenden und in sich reflektierende, als welcher er sich als Subjekt, als Unmittelbares, als Seiendes setzt. Der seiende Geist ist menschliches Bewußtsein.” (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, ed. Karl Heinz Ilting, Karl Brehmer, and Hoo Nam Seelmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), 85.)

This is the genuine idea of what religion is about. The cultus is also part of religion, and the cultus is nothing other than the singular consciousness securing this unity of itself with the divine. The unity, therefore, of the divine and the human is the genuine idea of religion. (L 186)

This “genuine idea of religion” does not dissolve the infinite into the finite, or the finite into the infinite. The “understanding” (*Verstand*) cannot grasp the dialectical character of the relationship; nor, for that matter, can interpreters of Hegel who read such a passage as essentially a form of humanism in which divinity becomes a self-projection of the finite. For Hegel himself, the understanding has made the divine idea into an abstraction, “into a being that is beyond the human; it has made it into an impregnable battlement, looming starkly, against which human beings run headlong when they approach it” (L 187). But divinity is not beyond the human; it is a *relationship* that overreaches the difference between finite and infinite without abolishing the difference. If the infinite were simply a self-projection of the finite, then it would be another finite, the “beyond” of the finite that is limited by what it is not, the finite. The true infinite is a relationship of its being-in-and-for-self (*Anundfürsichsein*) and its being-there (*Dasein*).¹⁸

Hegel is led in this fashion to a distinction between two types of religion, a distinction that is not found elsewhere in his writings. “The first is a religion of separation in which God stands on one side as an abstract being outside us, thus a religion not positing the singularity of consciousness, with the result that what it perhaps calls ‘spirit’ . . . is but an empty name” (L 187). The chief examples of such a religion are found in Judaism and Islam, and in “the religion of the present-day understanding,” which means Enlightenment theism. Such a depiction of Judaism and Islam is certainly one-sided, as Hegel himself came to recognize later at least in respect of Judaism, which was the first religion to grasp the idea of God as the One, as infinite subjectivity.¹⁹ The other type of religion “is the unity of infinite and finite, the unity of God and the world.” Instances of it

¹⁸ Hegel elaborates on the dialectics of infinite and finite in his *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), to which I turn in Ch. 5.

¹⁹ See the depiction of Judaism in the 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson et al., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), ii. 669–87. The curious pairing of Islam and the Enlightenment is found in the 1824 lectures, iii. 241–4.

occur in the Hindu incarnations and Greek art, the latter of which portrays “the divine in human shape.” But:

This type is found most purely in the Christian religion, where the unity of divine and human nature appears in Christ, and which allows God to appear in his Son, and so brings human beings to a consciousness of the unity. This anthropomorphic nature is not, however, portrayed in an unworthy fashion but rather in such a way that it leads to the true idea of God. The true idea of God entails that God is not a beyond, over and against which stands consciousness. (L 187–8)

Hegel here anticipates a leitmotiv of the latter part of the lectures, where an emphasis on the appearance of God in and as a “this” (*ein Dieses*) gradually emerges (see L 391, 396 et seq.). For the moment he continues with a very brief discussion of art and philosophy. Of philosophy he says that whether it can occur among a people is a function of religion. Only the Greeks and Christians could develop a genuinely concrete philosophy. Among the Orientals, the One remains an abstraction, not a unity of the finite and the infinite (L 188).

Just because true religion thematizes the unity-within-difference of divinity and humanity, objectivity and subjectivity, universality and individuality, it serves as the foundation of the state. Such a claim has led to enormous confusion and misunderstanding. In an addition to § 258 of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes the notorious statement, “Es ist der Gang Gottes in der Welt, daß der Staat ist.” The German is translated by Nisbet as, “The state consists in the march of God in the world.”²⁰ However, Shlomo Avineri points out that the unusual German syntax is better rendered literally as, “It is the way of God in the world, that there should be [literally: is] the state.”²¹ Hegel does not mean that any existing state is the “march of God” on earth or anything like it, but rather, according to Avineri, that “the very existence of the state is part of a divine strategy, not a merely human artifact.” Even the reference to a divine strategy is misleading. It is rather that the state is the objective sociopolitical actualization of the same unity that religion is concerned with, the unity of universality (the divine nature) and individuality (human subjectivity); this unity is the actualization of freedom in the world. One may still find such a formulation to be objectionable on various grounds, but according to

²⁰ *Philosophy of Right*, 279.

²¹ Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, 176–7. Avineri here follows a suggestion by Walter Kaufmann.

Hegel it is what it means to say that the state “rests” on religion. This statement does not mean that the existing state “needs” religion, as though religion were not already present in the state but must first “be imported into the state in bowls and buckets” (L 188–9.) Religion is not a more-or-less useful commodity but what is prior and foundational. Hegel does not envision the possibility that religion could cease to have an essential place in human lives, that it could become an option, and that the foundation of the state must be purely secular. Nor did the authors of the American Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution. Their claims about human equality and the “unalienable rights” of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are not self-grounding but based on the nature of ultimate reality itself. One of the possibilities we face today is that such claims have lost validity; another is that the claims, based on the Judeo-Christian tradition, can be reconstituted theologically and expanded by an appeal to a diversity of world religions.

In any event, Hegel’s close association of religion with the state means that discussions of public policy cannot be devoid of moral and religious considerations, and that the pretense of neutrality is just that, a pretense. Many issues of public policy today, such as abortion, stem cell research, wars of convenience, and the ideals of citizenship, public service, justice, and the common good, have an intrinsically ethico-religious dimension; and it is necessary to engage the debate on these grounds as well as secular or utilitarian grounds. Such a view, as earlier indicated, aligns Hegel more closely with the social or communitarian liberalism of Michael Sandel than with the classical liberalism of John Rawls—a social liberalism that recognizes the importance of religious convictions rationally defended.

Finite Aspects of Culture. Hegel now turns from the ideal aspect of the state to its material cultural functions (where, he claims, “the universal shines through this particular content”). The particular content comprises the bulk of the philosophy of right (law, property, morality, family, civil society), and Hegel provides a very brief summary in the *Weltgeschichte* (L 189–90). He starts with the customs and practices of peoples as found especially in family relationships. Marriage must be a monogamous relationship of one man and one woman because in the modern state each side (male and female) receives its full right. Related matters such as the treatment of children, family property, laws of inheritance, the behavior of individuals toward each other (courtesy, civility), all presuppose personal rights. A second point concerns “the practical conduct of human

beings in relation to nature . . . and how they act with respect to means for the satisfaction of their needs.” Here the reference is to “culture,” not in the educational sense of *Bildung* but in the material sense of *Kultur*—meaning such things as luxuries, weapons, tools, writing and printing. A third point focuses on rights in regard to finite needs. These are private rights as distinct from statutory law and include personal freedom, the exclusion of slavery, and the possession of private property.

The final matter concerns the sciences of the finite, that is, the sciences that are not philosophy: mathematics, natural history, physics, and presumably other natural sciences. Such sciences require a theoretical attitude that can emerge only after sensuous desires no longer prevail. “If individuals are inwardly free, have attained inner freedom for themselves, then objects are also allowed to be free and are engaged no longer simply in terms of desire but rather theoretically. The freedom of individuals belongs to the fact that they are curious” (L 190). Thus natural science could fully appear only in the modern world as a by-product of the actualization of freedom.

Although Hegel summarizes these matters only briefly, they play a large role in the course of world history that follows. But first the natural environment of the state must be considered: geography.

The State and Nature: Geography

The German editors of the Griesheim/Hotho transcription of the lectures of 1822–3 point out that geography has a systematic position in Hegel’s conception of the state, a fact that is obscured by earlier editions. Eduard Gans and Karl Hegel placed the discussion of geography between the introduction and the division of subjects, following the arrangement of 1830–1, while Georg Lasson and Johannes Hoffmeister moved it to an appendix.²² But Hegel himself says that we must consider the “connection of the state with its external natural setting.” The principles allotted to the world-historical peoples have not only a necessary succession in time but also “a concrete spatial specificity, a geographical position” (L 191).

²² *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, p. viii. See W. H. Walsh’s interesting summary of this section, based on John Sibree’s translation of the Karl Hegel edition, in “Principle and Prejudice in Hegel’s Philosophy of History,” in *Hegel’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Pelczynski, 183–9.

Geography adds a spatial coordinate to the temporal coordinate by which each people is analyzed. Later, when describing the positive as well as negative impacts of natural conditions, he says: "World history is spirit in the element of worldliness; thus we must also recognize the natural and the corporeal in it. The natural and the spiritual form one shape, and this is history" (L 198). The shape of history is not a purely spiritual shape but one embedded in natural conditions. The Hegelian idea goes forth of necessity into nature.²³

Hegel begins with a consideration of climate, which has an impact on peoples, but a lesser one, because while "history indeed lives on the soil of the natural . . . this is only one aspect, and the higher aspect is that of spirit" (L 191). Thus climate does not account for specific human accomplishments (e.g. the "mild Ionian sky" does not explain Homer). But there are climatic regions, such as the frigid arctic and the hot equatorial zones, where humans cannot flourish because so much of their energy is required simply to survive. A certain degree of liberation from nature is requisite if people are to "advance beyond feeding themselves from the crumbs of the master." Thus civilization develops in the temperate zones; and indeed the northern temperate zone "forms the stage of the world theater." This stage is "continental in scope, with a wide breast, while in the south the shapes taper into points, so that here there are quite distinctive human beings and animals" (L 192). Hegel regards this arrangement as "necessary," so he would have been astonished to learn about plate tectonics and how the continents have drifted together and apart over billions of years. He recognizes that human and animal migrations took place across the northern hemisphere, hence there are more isolated and distinctive species in the south; but he would have been equally astonished to learn that *Homo sapiens* first emerged in Africa. The whole concept of a fluid earth and evolving species was unavailable to him, although his ideas in many

²³ Hegel's only explicitly mentioned source for geography is the work of Carl Ritter, *Die Erdkunde im Verhältnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1817–18). Ritter, a founder of modern human geography, was professor of geography at the University of Berlin starting in 1820. Hegel must also have been familiar with the writings of the naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt (whose brother Wilhelm was one of the founders of the University of Berlin). Hegel had access to detailed sources for the geography and history of Asia and Europe, but he relied on travel and missionary reports for Africa and the Americas, which gave a very prejudiced and limited picture. His Eurocentric bias seems unavoidable, but in light of such bias his detailed attention to the Oriental world is all the more remarkable (in 1822–3 it consumes nearly half the work following the introduction).

respects are proto-evolutionary. Perhaps one can argue that the present geographical arrangement is “necessary” for the kind of world civilization that we actually have.²⁴

The New World. One of the divisions the world itself gives us is between the “new world” and the “old world.” Hegel starts with the new world, about which he has less to say. It is new in both physical and spiritual properties; so, for example, islands of the Pacific Ocean such as Australia are of more recent formation. The new world in general is “feebler” than the old, as is evident by comparing its wild animals with those in Africa and Asia; and by comparing its native populations and colonial civilizations, especially in Central and South America, with those of Europe.

North America is another matter. “America can have the aspect of a new land, a land of the future. Napoleon is supposed to have said that the old world wearied him” (L 193). Many agreed with him, and European settlers flocked to the new world. The Free States of North America are often cited as an example that even a large state can exist as free, that is, as a republic. It is a still-forming state, which does not yet have the need of a monarchy because it has not yet developed to this point. It is a federation of states, and such a federation shows its most vulnerable features in foreign relations. Only its peculiar (isolated) location has saved the federation from total destruction. In the War of 1812, the federated states could not conquer Canada, and the English even occupied Washington. Such tensions existed between the northern and southern states that, had the war continued much longer, a complete division of the country would have resulted. Migrations to the hinterlands of the Mississippi have eased social pressures, but when these lands are filled up the states will require a more centralized government. But Hegel offers no predictions; as a country of becoming, of the future, America “does not concern us further” (L 193–4).

In the lectures of 1830–1, Hegel elaborates his remarks about the Americas more fully. He distinguishes between the Catholic colonies in South America, dominated by the Roman Church and centralized military governments, intended to extract wealth forcibly through political control, and the Protestant settlements in North America, where religious

²⁴ In the lectures of 1830–1, he says that physical nature is “inherently a system of reason” or at least an “image” of reason (L30–1 9). In other words, it operates according to physical laws; and, among other laws scientists have discovered since Hegel’s time, are those that govern plate tectonics and the evolution of species.

freedom and diversity prevail, along with trust in the convictions of one's fellow citizens. The political need for a strong central government has not yet arisen, as it does when "a distinction of social classes exists and when wealth and poverty have become extreme." Such a condition does not yet exist in North America; however, "in England it has come about in the most extreme fashion, for what prevails there is an enormous wealth and a terrible poverty that is at once more dire in its extent." One solution is the resettlement of people via colonization. "England is even seizing upon this remedy, but the out-migration is not large enough in relation to the needs, since mechanization and the steam engine especially have rendered so many people in England redundant." America, however, has an open frontier that releases inner tensions, and thus its political constitution cannot be compared with those in European states for which such an outflow is no longer possible (L_{30-I} 50–60). This fragment of social history inserted into a section on geography probably reflects Hegel's renewed concern in 1830–I about political and social conditions in England.²⁵

The Old World. The old world is divided into three continents, which "stand in an essential relationship and constitute a rational totality." The Mediterranean Sea sunders these continents but also facilitates communication between them. Hegel here notes the beneficent role of water in human history (rivers, seas, and oceans); water both divides populations and binds them together. The Mediterranean is an ideal body of water to promote the development of human civilization, with its relatively small

²⁵ See Hegel's essay, "The English Reform Bill" (April 1831), in *Hegel's Political Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox with an introductory essay by Z. A. Pelczynski (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 295–330. J.-F. Suter summarizes Hegel's argument as follows: "While admitting that the Bill undermines the position of the nobility and represents a reawakening of reason and justice, he maintains that a much more thorough-going reform is required to remove the various unjust privileges and social inequalities in England. The contrast between the general misery of the people and the enormous wealth of a few individuals may lead to violent popular upheavals and to the overthrow of the constitution. In the absence of a strong governmental power and an independent civil service, England runs the risk of seeing a struggle for power between the 'new men'—the demagogues and the radicals—to whom the Bill opens the way to the House of Commons, and the traditional ruling class." J.-F. Suter, "Burke, Hegel, and the French Revolution," in *Hegel's Political Philosophy*, ed. Pelczynski, 68. Hegel had long been concerned about the appalling condition of factory workers in England. See *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, 175–7, 209–11. His concern was expressed more forcefully in this early version of the philosophy of right and was reawakened by the introduction of the First Reform Bill.

size and its many gulfs. It “invites and calls upon human beings to take to the sea because on the whole it presents such a friendly face to them” (L 194–5).

Hegel discusses the main geographical properties of the continents: the first are highlands and mountains; the second are breaks in the highlands caused by the flow of rivers to the sea; the third are meadows, valleys, and plains. The three continents are distinguished in accord with these features: in Africa highlands are the main feature; in Asia, fertile plains and alluvial valleys; in Europe, a mixture of these elements. The character of spirit differs in accord with these geographical features:

In Africa proper it is the sensuous nature at which human development is arrested: sensuous enjoyment, great muscular strength to sustain labor, childlike good nature, but also unreflective and unfeeling ferocity. Asia by contrast is the land of spiritual antithesis, which arrives at an ethical life but sticks with a natural, substantial ethical life, whereas the other aspect of the spiritual antithesis remains individual self-seeking, infinity of desire, and boundless extension of freedom, wholly abstract freedom. Europe is the descent out of abstract freedom into self, out of this boundless freedom into the particular; it is the deepening of spirit within itself, its diversification, and the elevation of the particular into the universal. (L 196)

Hegel then describes the human and natural geography of each of the continents.

Africa. Africa proper (sub-Saharan Africa) consists of highlands whose mountains form a band around the lush, hot, humid interior. The inhabitants who live here, Negroes, “have never emerged out of themselves, nor have they gained a foothold in history; its only further connection with history is that in darker days its inhabitants have been enslaved.” Slavery is a condition that ought not to exist but does exist in states that have not yet arrived at a condition of rationality; in the light shed by rationality, the intrinsic injustice of slavery becomes evident. Of course, motives of profit and prejudice can overwhelm rationality, as is evident from the slave trade itself. The second part of Africa is north of the Sahara Desert—“this dry, burning sea that more completely separates than does the sea itself.” The North African Mediterranean coastal region has had only a subsidiary role in world history and is not independent on its own account. The third part of Africa is Egypt, which is completely unique, standing as it does midway between Africa and the Near East, and it has played a major role in world history (L 197).

In the lectures of 1830–1, Hegel devotes most of his attention to sub-Saharan Africa, with only brief paragraphs on Asia and Europe—just the reverse of his emphasis in 1822–3. He does so because Africa has been neglected in earlier lectures and he seems intent on filling a lacuna (L30–1 70–80). He also remarks that he will not return to the topic of Africa, or of the Americas, in his treatment of the course of world history. The picture that emerges is not a pretty one. Hegel's sources are travel and missionary accounts, which reflect the bias and ignorance of their authors.²⁶ He says that the daylight of consciousness has not yet illumined the dark night of Africa, unchanged since the time of Herodotus. The religion of the Negroes is magic, a primitive form of spirituality that portrays the human as the supreme power and solely in command of natural forces. They use fetishes and at a higher level worship ancestors, who exercise power over the living. Human beings, claims Hegel, acquire value only in concert with the consciousness of a higher being, but the Negroes lack such a consciousness and thus have little respect for one another (e.g. they practice cannibalism). They also have no consciousness of their own freedom and allowed Europeans to carry them away as slaves. Their political arrangements are tribal, with all-powerful chiefs, the death of whom can cause the bonds of society to be ruptured in widespread massacres and carnage. The only connection Europeans have had with them is through the practice of slavery. Of this practice Hegel writes:

Slavery is unjust in and for itself, because freedom is the essence of human beings, though peoples must first be ready for it. In recognizing that slavery is thoroughly unjust, the Europeans would be acting wrongly if they wished to bestow freedom on Negro slaves instantaneously. Just like what the French did at the time of the French Revolution, the terrible consequences have made themselves equally evident. Rightly so, then, Europeans have proceeded slowly with the manumission of the Negroes. (L30–1 80)

²⁶ In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the principal sources for Hegel's treatment of African religion are: Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba, et Angola situati nell'Etiopia inferiore occidentale e delle missioni apostoliche esercitatevi da religiosi Capuccini* (Bologna, 1667; Ger. trans. 1694) (a work that Hegel himself acknowledged to be quite out of date); J. K. Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire Usually Called the Congo* (London, 1818); James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (Ger. trans., Leipzig, 1791); and George Forster's account of travels around the world with Captain Cook (1789). Presumably these and other sources are utilized for the philosophy of world history.

This account is of course prejudiced and inaccurate. But it is still the case today that democracy has taken root in Africa only with difficulty. Authoritarian regimes, tribal conflicts, the exploitation of resources by wealthy elites, and widespread poverty are still the rule rather than the exception. And even in North America, where the manumission was abrupt, another century was required to achieve basic civil rights. However, Hegel does not mention the role of racial prejudice in justifying the slave trade in the first place, then in subjugating European colonies in Africa and Asia, and finally in prolonging the segregation of blacks in Europe and America. Racial distinctions seem to be a factor of natural and geographical conditions for Hegel (L 196), not of racial ideology per se. He excludes Africans and Native Americans from world history and treats them under geography because, still being under the “thumb of nature” (L 192), they have not formed states. He favors the mixing of races in the case of Persians, Greeks, and Romans, but apparently not in the case of the Germans; and like most Europeans of his time he accepts the cultural superiority of the Caucasian race.²⁷

Asia. Asia is the world of “dawning”—the dawning of the sun, the dawning of world history, the rising of spirit into self-consciousness. Thus far, says Hegel, natural conditions have had a more negative and constricting impact on world history, but in Asia they turn positive. Apart from the entire northern slope of Russia with its severe climate and lack of history, there is, first, a massive highland, the Himalaya Mountains, and second, the river basins with their enormous alluvial plains. The rivers include the Huang Ho and Yangtze in China, the Ganges and Indus in India, the Tigris and Euphrates in Persia, and the rivers that flow into the Caspian and Aral Seas. The mountains, plains, and valleys provide topographies for wholly antithetical human dispositions, but they are connected by rivers and the inhabitants come into contact. This is where civilization first springs up. The highlands are the place for nomadism and isolation. The mountains foster a pastoral life full of dangers but also a warrior strength and courage. The valleys serve as a fertile ground for the transition to agriculture, which brings with it settlement, cultivation, ownership, and

²⁷ See Robert Bernasconi, “‘The Ruling Categories of the World’: The Trinity in Hegel’s Philosophy of History and the Rise and Fall of Peoples,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Houlgate and Baur, 315–31, esp. 324–8. On Hegel’s theories about race, see also below, pp. 101 n. 12, 124 n. 34.

laws. As the mountain and highland peoples eventually descend into the valleys they find a more comfortable existence. The third topography of Asia runs along the coasts of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea. Here Asian peoples reach out to other regions, European and North African (L 198–200, 202–3).

Europe. With Europe there are two aspects: its turning outward via contact with the Mediterranean (Europe south of the Alps), and Europe on its own account. With respect to the latter, Eastern and Western Europe must be distinguished. The eastern, Slavic part is connected with Asia. “The heart of Europe is the western part, which was opened up above all by Julius Caesar, who broke through the Alps, occupied Britannia and Germania, and linked this new world with the old. This was truly a manly deed as compared with the youthful exploit of Alexander, who opened up the Orient” (L 201). Hegel then goes on to discuss the critical role played by the Mediterranean Sea, which is the “midpoint” of the ancient world, the “spiritual point of union between east and west.”

This sea is very influential; if the center of the ancient world were not a sea, world history would be powerless; for as a sea this center gives life to and connects everything, and without it there would be no world history. Just as Rome and Athens could not exist without a forum and without roads, so also the ancient world would be nothing without the sea. (L 201)

For Asia, the sea has no significance, and its trading routes are over land. But in Europe the relationship to the sea is precisely what is important. Seafaring requires the going forth of life beyond itself; it engenders virtues of courage, nobility, and cunning. From it arises an awareness of individual independence and freedom.

For the sea is this great expanse that seems innocent. But precisely the weakness of this element, its compliant and permeable nature, is a danger to which human beings oppose their instrument. . . . The ship, this swan, so easy in its movement, is an instrument that pays tribute to the audacity of the understanding. This audacity of the understanding is what is missing from the splendid edifice of Asian ethical life. Although seafaring is an occupation too, it is liberating to individuals, gives freedom to their lives. So the principle of the freedom of individual persons has become [foundational] to the European life of the state. (L 204–5)

Thus Hegel draws the discussion back to the central theme in his treatment of the state: the actualization of freedom (including the *material* of its actualization). It might seem extraordinary that this actualization should

first occur through a feature of the natural world, water, the conquering of which evokes a material shape hewn from wood. But freedom, once it is born on the sea in ships, sails away into the realm of spirit and, like a swan, soars into the wind. The ship is a natural instrument with spiritual qualities. The sails of a ship symbolize the freedom of movement generated by the power of an even more permeable element than water, namely air. World history itself sweeps from east to west; it “has arisen (*aufgegangen*) in the southeast, and it has subsided (*niedergegangen*) into itself to the northwest.” This self-subsidence signifies that “spirit is such as to create itself out of itself, as its own world” (L 201). Spirit is not extinguished by this subsidence, any more than the sun is by its setting.

4

The Course of World History: Shapes of Freedom

The Division of World History

The “division” of world history is found at the end of the introduction prior to the treatment of the “course” of world history. The division follows from the stages in the development of the consciousness of freedom, namely, that *one* is free, *some* are free, and *all* (human beings as such) are free. However, these three stages yield a fourfold (or a fivefold) division. Hegel compares the development of history with the growth of an individual human being—the phylogenetic replicating the ontogenetic and vice versa (L 205–10, L_{30–1} 81–7).

The state begins when subjectivity is not yet for itself and the subject has not come into its own. This is the most immediate form of ethical life, the (1) *infancy* or *childhood* of history. Such a state is based on family relationships with paternal oversight and punishment, and it is found in the Far East. It does not change inwardly and is only outwardly in conflict; as with China and India, it goes through repetitive cycles and has an unhistorical history. The second shape is the (2) *boyhood* of the world in which the states are at constant odds with one another.¹ Conflict and struggle cause a self-concentration into individuality, which grows into the age of (3) *youth*; here the realm of Greece comes to prominence. This is the

¹ “Boyhood” is associated at one point by Hegel with Egypt (L 366), which seems ironic since Egypt was not an outwardly aggressive empire. However, Hegel also has Persia in mind, which is “at odds” with both Egypt and Greece because it preserves only an individuality of different peoples but not of individual persons. He says that the self-concentration into individuality first appears as something natural, as light, which is not yet the light of the personal soul (L 206–7). Persia and Egypt together (the Middle East) represent a transitional stage between Asia (infancy) and Greece (youth).

realm of beautiful freedom and individual personality, but it is fragile and momentary. "The Greeks intuited their unity, the Romans reflected it" (L 207).

History advances to an empire that represents the (4) *adulthood* of demanding labor, the sacrifice of individuality to universality. Such an empire, the Roman Empire, in which subjectivity is reconciled with substance, and individuals are subjugated in abstract universality, seems to be eternal; but its successor, the Holy Roman Empire, perished in 1806 with the renunciation of the imperial title by the last of the Habsburgs. The transition to the last principle is the internal struggle of abstract universality against the principle of particular subjectivity, a struggle that must end with the victory of subjective singularity. Spiritual reconciliation is produced: individual personality is transfigured into self-subsistent universality and subjectivity, into the divine personality. The latter must appear in the world, for the self-subsisting universal includes subsisting actuality. From here on, a spiritual realm stands over against the worldly one. At this point, the final realm is attained, that of (5) *old age* or *maturity*. Spirit has become an infinite power to maintain within itself the moments of earlier developments and thus to know itself in its totality. The final realm is that of the Germanic or European peoples, whose history moves from the enormous antithesis between the spiritual and worldly realms to their reconciliation. The principle of this realm is free spirit subsisting for itself; this principle is the unity of subjective and objective truth, the principle revealed by Christ. But at first this unity, this reconciliation, is only implicit, and its actualization requires an enormous labor that is not yet fully consummated.

Such a phylogeny is constructed, of course, from the point of view of a present historical moment early in the nineteenth century, and one has to wonder what role is allotted to the future. Will the age of maturity simply be prolonged indefinitely, or will the time come for a new stage, and if so what might it be? Hegel does not answer this question in the "division," but he remarks later, in conjunction with the Germanic World, that with the Christian religion the principle of the world is complete, that it dominates the globe, and that any further essential revolutions will occur within it (L 463–4.) Nonetheless, he may have glimpsed the possibility of a post-Christian world in which Christianity is no longer the dominant force; and post-Christian secularism might be considered an extension, although inadequate, of the Christian principle.

Hegel's highly abstract and condensed remarks, especially about the Germanic World, are supplemented by a more concrete description in the lectures of 1830–1:

The goal of world history is therefore subjective freedom together with the consciousness of what is substantial, of reason. This principle has been expressed in the Christian religion. . . . Each individual acquires an infinite worth, and in this relation to God people are equal. . . . Subjective freedom consists in the subject's being consonant with the substantial will. This is the principle of the Christian religion, although at first it is only an abstract principle in the inner being of spirit. Then it appears within the worldly domain to which, however, there also belong desires, inclinations, and impulses. Hence what comes about is a spiritual realm, but one that is not yet realized. By prolonged struggles the Germanic peoples have fought their way through to its realization. The spiritual principle is acknowledged, and appears positing itself in determinate existence, as the *church*, which initially, however, is itself still distinguished from the principle. The church proves to be a worldly domain that uses the spiritual principle to its own advantage, as a crude, immediate worldly domain of impulses that are not yet educated. In its determinate existence the church is wholly worldly and carries on with all manner of worldly corruption; it exhibits the greatest lust for power, its passions pass themselves off as absolutely justified, and these passions are all the more presumptuous in their bearing upon the spiritual realm. The worldly realm is totally subjugated by the spiritual domain, yet soon the worldly realm shall begin to justify itself, for it has reason germinating within itself and it feels itself at last absolutely justified within itself; it is no longer secondary to the church and is subordinate to it no more; thus the way is prepared for the reconciliation of the two sides. The church retains no genuine priority in relation to the state, and spiritual matters are likewise scarcely foreign to the state as a community. Freedom has found the means to realize its concept, its truth; this is the goal, and this long process is what we have to examine.

(L30–I 86–7)

On this scenario, much of the history of Europe is consumed by the relations between church and state. The original Christian principle appears in and as a spiritual domain, the church. However, as the church grows into a large institutional entity, it assumes many of the features of the world from which it is supposedly distinct. The medieval church becomes a world of its own that subjugates the secular powers. Luther opposes the corruption of the church and establishes a new kind of spiritual community that is not opposed to the secular world but infuses and transforms it. Thus the way is prepared for the full actualization of freedom in history.

However, the secular institutions of government in the early nineteenth century can scarcely be said to be that actualization. This is the dilemma

with which Hegel leaves the story. And the story itself is partly implausible. George Dennis O'Brien asks whether all the cultures of humanity can be strung together into a grand march of freedom, and suggests that instead history illustrates a perpetual struggle over human freedom. Hegel's story is more like a plot in a work of fiction than actual historical progress, and O'Brien applies an aesthetic paradigm to evaluate it.² It is worth noting, however, that what Hegel offers is more a *typology* or even a *geography* of cultures than an actual history of cultures. The historical connections between Asian, Middle Eastern, and European cultures are elusive, to say the least. Hegel is writing a history of *spirit* rather than a chronology of world civilization. Much can be faulted in his approach, especially his account of the Asian world in its *ancient* manifestation only, not as a contemporary phenomenon, but also his neglect of Africa and the Americas. The Hegelian story would have to be written very differently today, but the central plot concerning "shapes of freedom" remains compelling. I return to these thoughts in the final section of the chapter.

The lectures of 1822–3 and 1830–1 apportion the course of world history differently. In 1822–3, the Oriental World is treated at great length, comprising nearly half the transcription following the introduction. As a consequence, Hegel began to run out of time as the end of the semester approached, and the treatment of the Roman and Germanic Worlds is compressed. In 1830–1, this imbalance is redressed. The discussion of the Oriental World is reduced by slightly less than half the length of that ascribed to it in 1822–3, and the treatment of the Greek World is reduced by a quarter. At the same time, the attention devoted to the Roman and Germanic Worlds is increased by about a third. As a consequence, the lectures of 1830–1 offer very little that is new for the Oriental and Greek Worlds, whereas they become a source for the Roman and Germanic Worlds, even though the presentation below follows the order and substance of the lectures of 1822–3. The latter is the case not only because the lectures of 1822–3 are now available to English readers but also because they offer a richer philosophical conceptuality than those of 1830–1. References to the lectures of 1830–1 are placed in footnotes so as not to interrupt the flow of the narrative in 1822–3. The survey that follows only

² George Dennis O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 150–2, 167–74.

touches the highlights;³ for an appreciation of Hegel's detailed knowledge of world history, one must read the text itself.

The Oriental World

We begin with the East, where the dawn of spirit occurs, while its setting or "descent into itself" happens in the West (see L 211 n. 1). Our cultural-historical analysis also moves from East to West: we start with China, turn next to India and its rivers, the Ganges and the Indus, then move on to the Middle East, Persia, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Finally, after a detour through North Africa (Egypt), we continue on a westerly course to Greece, Rome, and Europe. Temporal and geographical coordinates are synchronized; spirit moves through time from East to West (L 211). This is the metanarrative on which Hegel plots world history.⁴ The future of the plot remains open. Its present-day implications are examined in the last section of the chapter: the metanarrative becomes a multinarrative.

China

Hegel, who engages in a fundamental way with China,⁵ notes that China has astonished Europeans ever since it became known. It is self-contained, has reached a high level of culture independently of foreign ties, and is the only world empire that has lasted from the most ancient times up to the present day. It is vast in expanse with a very large population; its

³ The survey draws directly from my editorial introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011), 31–63. This material is supplemented here by page references and by information from the lectures of 1830–1 as appropriate. The bibliography for the *Lectures* lists about 135 sources used by Hegel.

⁴ On history as "plot," and the connection between historical and fictional plot, see Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), iii, esp. ch. 8. I return to a discussion of ch. 9, "Should We Renounce Hegel?," at the end of this chapter.

⁵ See L 212–13 n. 2 on Hegel's sources. Three works are of principal importance: the *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, by the missionaries of Peking, 16 vols. (Paris, 1776–1814); Jean-Baptiste Grosier, *De la Chine; ou Description générale de cet Empire*, 3rd edn., 7 vols. (Paris, 1818–20); and Joseph de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1777–85). These works provided a new foundation for Europeans' information about China. Hegel apparently did not make much use of Chinese texts in translation. His information about the *Shu-king*, the *Yi-king*, and translations of Confucius and Lao-tzu, must not be based on his own reading of them.

government is well-regulated, just, benevolent, and wise; and it has written documents that go back thousands of years. But the principle of this empire has never changed, nor has an alien principle ever been imposed on it, so in this sense it has no history; everything is forever the same (L 211–15).

Each people has original books that contain its myths and ancient traditions. Homer's are such books for the Greeks, as the Bible is for us. The Chinese named such books *Jing*—the principal ones being the *Yi-jing* and the *Shu-jing*. The latter has been translated into French by missionaries, so in Hegel's day it was accessible to those who did not read Chinese. It begins its narrative with Yao of the Xia dynasty in the third millennium before Christ and contains the work of court historians. Prior to these written documents, history disappears into unrecorded time (L 215–17).⁶

Hegel refers to "Fo, a divine figure, whom people in eastern India call Buddha." Distinct from him is Fo-hi or Fu-hi (Fuxi), to whom the invention of the Gua is attributed. The Gua consist of certain arrangements of lines, and meditation on these lines is found in the *Yi-jing*. The straight line is the simple material from which all things are constituted, and the broken line is the distinction of this simplicity. Various combinations of these lines represent the speculative philosophy of China (L 218).

As to the ancient history of China, separate warring kingdoms were eventually unified under a single emperor. What is "factually historical" commences with Yu (or Yao) of the Xia dynasty in 2201 BC. Hegel is struck by the coincidence of this date with the historical beginnings of other empires, for all of which he gives precise years: Egypt (2207), Assyria (2221), and India (2204). Struggles with river flooding and the maintenance of dikes for rice cultivation were major preoccupations of the Chinese from the beginning. China was conquered twice by Mongols and Tatars, but was not long under their dominion. The Great Wall was built to keep out the Manchu-Tatars but it did not succeed. The Manchu emperors were among the best, and under them China reached its greatest extent, ranging as far as the Caspian Sea and Siberia (L 219–23).

The Chinese state is similar to European institutions in its ethical life and art. But its principle rests wholly on patriarchal or family relationships. Hegel identifies several characteristics of the latter. First, strict rules and

⁶ The science of archaeology was just getting under way in Hegel's time and prior to the nineteenth century was confined principally to Greek and Roman civilization.

instructions govern all family relationships: children have a total duty to parents; marriage is monogamous but husbands may own concubines; the father alone has possessions while children have none; families must honor their ancestors. Second, the entire state rests on the person of the emperor and his hierarchy of officials, who control everything in accord with strict moral codes and laws as determined by the emperor and overseen by the mandarins. Third, there are no castes and no aristocracy of birth or wealth among citizens. At one time, state public property was apportioned to pater-families, but private property now exists with laws governing inheritance. Anyone can sell himself as a slave, and parents can sell their children; women, children, and concubines of criminals can be enslaved (L 223–32).

In the patriarchal principle, the legal sphere is not separated from the moral aspect, so that no internal moral autonomy exists. Rather, detailed regulations govern all aspects of life, the violation of which incurs very strict punishment. The government that issues such legislation takes the place of one's own inner being, and by doing so the principle of subjective freedom is annulled. This freedom, this intangible sphere of inwardness, respect for this inviolable zone, are essential to the European principle but lacking here. Thus, when a crime is committed, the entire family undergoes punishment, which is totally contrary to the recognition of individual moral responsibility. Goods can be confiscated, and corporal punishment such as flogging is common. Hegel remarks that the Chinese have been governed as an "underage people," which fosters an ethics of dependency and the principle of vengeance (L 232–7).

In ancient times, the Chinese were famous for their scientific knowledge, but, like everything else, it has been controlled by the emperors and the court, so that the free soil of inwardness on which alone intellect flourishes is lacking. Nonetheless, the Chinese did make great strides in particular sciences such as physics (the magnet and compass), astronomy, the circulation of fluids, and mechanical devices for calculating (they use a binary rather than a decimal system). Their written language is hieroglyphic, not the expression of sounds by letters of the alphabet, and it is extremely complicated, requiring the learning of many thousands of characters and their combinations; but the spoken language is meager and monosyllabic (L 238–43).

The Chinese are skilled in the mechanical arts but lack the creative power of spirit. They make beautiful landscape paintings and portraits,

which are lacking, however, in subtlety of light and shadow. They excel at horticulture and gardens (L 243).

Hegel concludes with a discussion of Chinese religion,⁷ noting that missionary reports (our principal source) are suspect because the missionaries' own religion is an obstacle to fair reporting. The ancient patriarchal religion is simply that humans pray to God as the ruler of earth and heaven—God who is one, eternal, benevolent, and just, rewarding goodness and punishing evil. In its abstractness, this religion excludes the richness and profundity of nature and spirit. They call their supreme being "Tian" or heaven, but they do not simply worship nature. "No people can be said to have taken what is simply sensible to be the divine, since it is necessarily spirit's nature not to stop short with its natural aspect, but to proceed to something inward. All pure religions involve a metaphorical transposition from the sensible into thought" (L 245). With thought, conceptions of the universal arise, but here the universal lacks determinacy. The emperor is called "son of heaven," and he alone presents offerings on behalf of his people during the four seasonal festivals. The religion is not exclusive, so Jews, Muslims, and Christians are accepted so long as they do not incite rebellion. The Chinese also revere "Shen" or spirits, similar to Greek dryads, the souls of natural things, arranged in hierarchical ranks. Temples to the Shen are found everywhere, and superstition subjugates the inner spirit of the people (L 243–9).

Particular sects are found, one of which is that of Lao-Tse (Laozi). By withdrawing into self through study, the more profound devotees become Shen themselves through strenuous discipline, initiating an elevation of human beings to the divine. According to Lamaism, "the emperor's private religion," divinity has its concrete existence in a living human being. Such a belief "is linked to the religion of the Buddha." The religion of Fo (which may or may not be the same as that of Buddha) holds to metempsychosis, according to which all shapes (humans, stars, etc.) are only forms or revelations of the One, the absolute. Followers of this religion locate what is supreme in nothingness; they elevate themselves by renunciation of all sensation, seeking utter emptiness. From these

⁷ Hegel treats the Oriental religions for the first time in a significant way in his 1824 philosophy of religion lectures. Here he discusses the religions of China, India, Persia, and Egypt, all under the general rubric of the religion of nature. See *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), ii. 233–381.

compressed remarks, we recognize the confusion and misinformation in Hegel's characterization of Chinese religion (L 249–50).

India

Hegel engaged with India for the first time in a significant way in these lectures. German scholars had confined themselves to the language, art, religion, and philosophy of India and had arrived at a romantic, idealizing interpretation. Hegel relied on the English sources because they acquired their information from first-hand experience, but he also adopted the largely negative judgment formed by the British.⁸ He was blind to their bias because it confirmed his own suspicions not only about moral and philosophical issues but also about the inability of the Indians to organize life politically (and for Hegel political organization is the actual bearer of history).

Whereas the Chinese remained cut off, India “has been receptive toward the rest of the world” and “appears as an effective link in the chain of world history. . . . It has been a source of wisdom, science, and culture, as well as of natural treasures” (L 251). Thus all nations have beaten a path to India and all have attempted to acquire a foothold there.

Hegel begins with some general remarks about the “principle” of India. This is a land of *dreaming fantasy* in which rationality, morality, and subjectivity are nullified. It is also a land of extremes—oscillating between a wild, sensuous imagination and a totally inanimate abstraction of inwardness. It lacks a history in the sense of chronological records of actual events. It advances on the Chinese in that the determinacy that hitherto had been posited externally becomes inward, but its idealism is one of sheer imagination devoid of reason and freedom. It allows no free being-for-self of subjects, and no distance between subject and object. Its fundamental intuition is that of an absolute substantiality that constitutes the essence of all things. This is not a pantheism of thought (as with Spinoza) but a pantheism of representation, which imports sensible material directly into

⁸ The English sources included *Institutes of Hindu Law; or the Ordinances of Menu*, trans. William Jones (Calcutta, 1794); *The Code of Gentoo Law*, ed. Nath Brassey Halhed (London, 1777); James Mill, *The History of British India*, 2nd edn. (London, 1820); Jean Antoine Dubois, *Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India* (London, 1817); Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama, in Tibet* (London, 1800); Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London, 1770); and numerous articles in *Asiatic Researches*, a publication of the East India Company.

the universal. "The divine is grasped in finite form, the finite spun out extravagantly" (L 254).⁹ This rendering of God in sensuous form can have two meanings. In the first, that of Hinduism proper, the representation of unity is universal, and the entire sensible realm, without exception, is divinized. In the second, that of Buddhism or Lamaism, the rendering of God concentrates to "an immediately present focal point" (L 251–5).

The discussion turns next to "the region of India." Its main features are the river basins of the Ganges and the Indus, with mountains to the north and west. The name "Indian" derives from the Indus River, but it is not known whether the people called themselves "Indians" or even had a common name for themselves. Alexander the Great came as far as the Indus, and the British in turn arrived some twenty-one hundred years later (at Delhi). In India, everything necessary for a state is lacking, above all the principle of freedom; in China the state is the totality, but in India there is just a people without a state and without an ethical life. The government is an unprincipled, lawless despotism. Asia as a whole is the breeding ground of despotism, and if the ruler is evil, despotism becomes tyranny. The Indians are nonetheless a people of ancient culture because the fertility of the river valleys made for an easy existence and from early times produced a communal life (L 255–7).

Hegel devotes considerable attention to the system of castes, which correspond to four occupations that are found in every society in one form or another. These are the intellectual class (priests, scholars, scientists), the practical class (government and military leaders), the manufacturing and agricultural class, and laborers and servants; to these is appended (in India) a fifth, ignoble caste. The distinctive feature about India is that these become natural distinctions, based on birth, and cannot be chosen freely. They entirely dominate Hindu life and become a permanent, despotic arrangement in which the highest group (the Brāhmins) assumes the status of divinity while the lowest (the Pariahs or Chandalas, see L 260 n. 8) is reduced to subhuman status. Persons who are neglectful of their duties can become outcastes and lose all legal protections. Detailed regulations governing the castes are found in the *Laws of Manu*. Hegel notes in particular

⁹ Somewhat later in this discussion (L 277) Hegel distinguishes between "the One," Brahman, which is beyond all concept and representation and is invisible, eternal, omnipresent, and omnipotent, and the representation of this One in numerous gods, which are worshiped in specific sensual shapes. So his summary at this point seems unbalanced.

the degraded status assigned to women, who are the property of their fathers and husbands. Human life in general has no inherent ethical value, and without free will there can be no proper political life, no freedom of a political state, but only capricious despotism (L 257–72). The lectures of 1830–1 dwell on the caste system in great detail, even to the exclusion of other topics, specifying the privileges and duties of Brāhmins, the astonishing austerities of yogis, the life-confining rules, the inhumane punishments, and so on (L₃₀₋₁ 137–58). The purpose of all this detail simply seems to be to underscore the effects of a deficient ethical life and the lack of a just political system.

In Hegel's view, Hindu religion is composed of two extremes: on the one hand a singular absolute substance, Brahman, into which everything vanishes, and on the other hand an indeterminate multiplicity of sensuous images (natural phenomena, animals, deities) and a cultus that is an "unbridled, licentious sensuality" (young women placed in the temple as sexual objects, and so on). The Hindus do have worthy views of the one substance: it is beyond all conception and understanding and is invisible, eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient; but it lacks consciousness, and thus self-consciousness cannot know itself in relating to it. Renunciation is the supreme virtue, a self-mortification even unto death; this is a liberation that has a merely negative significance (L 276–7; cf. 273–81).¹⁰

We have defined the Hindu principle as withdrawal from self and complete lack of freedom in the positive sense. Without self and freedom, nothing good is possible: the state, purpose, rational and ethical life. The political condition as the Europeans found it was a host of principalities ruled by Muslim and Hindu dynasties. No laws governed their succession, so the history of the Indian realm is a ceaseless interplay of uprisings, conspiracies, violence, and brutal episodes. Only in their epic poems are there traces of an earlier splendor, which proves to be a fantasy world, although conditions flourished under a few individual kingdoms. The entire ethical situation is determined by the caste distinctions that seem to have been in place already at the time of Alexander the Great. The Hindus have no historical perspective and are incapable of historiography; everything for them blurs into extravagant images lacking intelligibility.

¹⁰ A lengthy and more appreciative interpretation of Hinduism is found in the 1824 and 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 316–52, 579–609.

Because they have no subjective sense of history, they have no objective sense either (L 281–9).

Where does India stand in the framework of world history? Whereas China as the patriarchal whole has oneness as its basic characteristic, the Indian principle is the second element of the idea, that of distinction. Both are necessary, and in this sense India represents a world-historical advance. Moreover, distinction and difference must go outward, and thus India is connected with the rest of the world, while China remains isolated. India has always been an object of desire, especially by peoples of the West. The ancient Indian language, Sanskrit, lies at the basis of all the Indo-European languages (a recent discovery in Hegel's time), and this fact indicates an ancient and widespread dispersal of tribes from India and Persia (L 291–5).

The section on India ends with a discussion of Buddhism and Lamaism. For various reasons, Hegel's treatment of the most widespread and influential of Asian religions is unsuccessful. For one thing, his discussion of India had become so lengthy that there was little time left to consider it. For another, Buddhism, as a religion spanning many lands and peoples, was not, in Hegel's sense, a bearer of history, which in his conception could only be a state. He limits himself more or less to repetition of a few travelers' reports and omits almost entirely a presentation of Buddhist doctrine.¹¹ Confusion abounds in Hegel's treatment of the historical circumstances of the Buddha, who is the "other" to Brahmā and Brahman. Buddhism is a more humane religion than Hinduism, and the Buddhist's God is a living human being. The Buddha attained nirvana, "a condition of supreme abstraction in which spirit was immersed within itself," a condition of bliss. While the Buddha was a historical figure, the lamas are human beings who are "revered as God present today"; when one dies, the new lama is found in an infant selected by priests. Thus a chain of living incarnations of God continues uninterrupted. Hegel devotes more attention to Lamaism, which is associated with a specific nation, Tibet, than he does to Buddhism (L 295–303).

¹¹ See L 295 n. 106. In the lectures of 1830–1, there is no mention of Buddhism and Lamaism at the end of the section on India (a result, perhaps, of Hegel's drastic shortening of this section). Rather, a few brief remarks are found about the "religion of Fo" (Buddhism) in the section on China. There is, however, a discussion of Buddhist doctrine, and on the whole a more appreciative treatment, in the philosophy of religion lectures, notably those of 1827. See *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 562–79.

Persia

Ancient Persia was much more involved in the external connections of world history than were China and India; but, while the Chinese and Indian worlds are still contemporaneous with us, the Persian world has long vanished. “With this empire we enter for the first time into world history proper” (L 304), since China and India lie outside the “connections” of world history and do not “impinge” on it; but they are still part of it in the sense that history actually starts with them, and they possess an “inward” history.¹² In Persia we find a true *empire* comprised of many diverse peoples, extending from the Indus River to the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Ethnic groups within the empire persisted in their autonomy and yet were dependent on a point of unity that held them in equilibrium. Thus the principle of the Persian Empire is the combination of the preceding principles, exemplifying both a unification of the whole (the Chinese principle) and the distinction of peoples (the Indian) (L 304–6). In Hegel’s treatment, Persia is composed of four main ethnic and

¹² The beginning of the treatment of Persia differs in the lectures of 1830–1: “Asia falls under the two headings of the Far East and the Near East, [two regions] essentially distinct from one another. We have examined China and India, the two great nations of the Far East; they belong to the Asiatic race proper, to the Mongolian race, and so take on a character of their very own. The nations of the Near East, in contrast, indeed belong to the Caucasian or European race and stand in relation to the West, whereas the Far East exists [off] by itself” (L30–1 159–60). Hegel’s indication that not only China but also India belong to the “Mongolian” race seems strange. This may have been a mishearing on K. Hegel’s part since, in 1822–3, Hegel says that “the Indian *and* Mongol world belongs to the Far East” (L 304). Earlier in the lectures of 1822–3, he refers to the recently discovered Indo-European linguistic connection, which “shows the historical links between the Germanic peoples in particular and those of India”; and he adds that “these nations spread outwards from Asia and developed in disparate ways from a primordial kinship” (L 114–15). In any event, the ethnicity of India is not Mongolian but Dravidic and Aryan. In 1830–1, Hegel seems intent on drawing a sharper distinction between the Asiatic race (*Race*) and the Caucasian or European race (*Race*), although in 1822–3 he does say that “in Persia today there is a different stock, a finer race (*eine andere Rasse, ein schöneres*) of people more related to the Europeans” (L 304–5). But the difference has to do with the “sense of self” rather than inherent racial characteristics. Hegel’s only use of the terms *Race*, *Rasse*, and *Kaukasisch* occurs in these passages. It seems doubtful to me to argue on the basis of them that Hegel intended to exclude China and India (and Egypt?) from world history, and to regard only the Germanic or European peoples as the true bearers of world history. See Robert Bernasconi, “The Ruling Categories of the World: The Trinity in Hegel’s Philosophy of History and the Rise and Fall of Peoples,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 315–31, esp. 325–6.

geographical divisions: the Zend people in Bactria, the Assyrian and Babylonian peoples, Media or Persia proper, and Syria.¹³

Anquetil du Perron's discovery and publication of the ancient religious book of the Zend people, the Zend-Avesta, introduces us to the injunctions of Zoroaster and the religion of the ancient Persians, which is still found today in isolated clusters. Hegel names this religion the "religion of light," for light involves the higher, spiritual element worshiped by the Persians. This is a nature worship but not an idolatry of natural objects. Light is "this universal, simple, physical essence that is pure like thought." In the intuition of light, "the soul goes within itself and thus also makes the object seen within itself; this being-within-itself of the pure object, of the light, is then immediately thought, or the spiritual as such." But because of light's sensible nature, "free thought is not yet the free foundation" (L 310–11). Directly opposite to light is darkness, the great antithesis in Persian religion, its dualism—the absolute antithesis of good and evil, light and darkness, Ormazd and Ahriman. Hegel considers this dualism to be superior to the absolute pantheism of the Hindus, but it is still the natural mode of expressing opposition. The unity from which the two sides originate is uncreated time, which itself is only an abstract unity. Profound metaphysical characteristics adhere to Ormazd: he is not fire as such but the fluidity of fire; his light is the excellence of all creation; he is love, the basic seed of all good, the gift of knowledge, the ground of actuality and possibility, the source of everything living. One serves Ormazd and reveres light by planting trees and growing crops, by avoiding impurity, by obeying the laws, and by partaking of Hom, a plant juice that is consumed along with unleavened bread—a ritual that (says Hegel) mirrors our Christian sacrament of the Lord's Supper (L 307–16).

The wealthier part of the empire is on the western side, namely Babylonia and Assyria in the river region of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Here we find agricultural and city life displacing nomadic existence. We

¹³ See L 306 n. 5. Hegel availed himself of various sources for his treatment of Persia. He made use of J. F. Kleuker's German translation (Riga, 1776–83) of Anquetil du Perron's edn. of the *Zend-Avesta* (Paris, 1771); as well as of Joseph Görres, *Das Heldenbuch von Iran aus dem Schah Nameh des Firdusi* (Berlin, 1820). He drew on various English travel reports, especially those by Francis Wilford. Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker*, 2nd edn., 4 vols. (Leipzig and Darmstadt, 1819–21) contained valuable information on Persia. Finally, he relied extensively on the ancient historians: Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Xenophon.

know little about the spiritual customs other than that the worship of nature is universal. Hegel makes a point about the subordinate status of women (each woman of Babylon had to sit in the temple and offer herself once to a stranger, and maidens were married annually by auction). It is not a general Oriental practice that women should have a voice in the choice of a husband; this is found only later in Europe. Communal, not individual, values prevail (L 316–21).

Hegel turns next to Persia proper, for which he is dependent on Greek and Jewish sources and Persian epic poems such as the *Shahnameh* of Firdawsi. Cyrus, a Persian from the house of the Achaemenids and related to the Median royal line, consolidated the empire in the sixth century BC, and through a series of wars became the most powerful ruler in the world. The empire he created was a loose union of peoples who were allowed to retain their own characteristics and individual identity. This allowance for individuality was one of the great features of Cyrus, who was a brutal conqueror but magnanimous in victory. “The Persian, the worshiper of the light, of purity, hovers tolerantly over the whole, free of animosity and hostile particularity” (L 329). The successors of Cyrus continued this policy, but a thousand years later there appeared the fanaticism of Islam, which produced the complete opposite, the destruction of all differences (L 321–30).

Under “Syria” Hegel considers the Semitic peoples who lived along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Whereas Central Asian peoples worshiped nature as a power over them, the Phoenicians conquered the most savage of natural powers, the sea, and used it to colonize and to engage in extensive commerce.¹⁴ The religion of Astarte and Adonis infuses a higher spiritual element. Adonis both dies and is reborn, so that anguish and suffering are not devalued as in Hinduism but affirmed as an essential element of human experience, and indeed of the deity’s experience. Suffering is discovery of the negative, but in it is contained the infinite affirmation, the sense of self, the positive factor. Here we find anticipations of Hegel’s treatment of the so-called “religion of anguish” in the 1831 philosophy of religion lectures (L 330–2 incl. n. 89).

Finally, Hegel turns to the Jewish religion. Israel’s significance at this stage in history is not in its being an independent state, and thus Israel does

¹⁴ The Phoenicians are also credited with the invention of the alphabet, but Hegel does not mention it here. He alludes to it, however, in his discussion of Greece (L 376).

not constitute its own realm of world history, but its religion is far advanced over others of the Persian Empire. Its God is grasped purely as thought: in Israel the light of the Persians has been completely spiritualized and has blossomed as thought. Thus human beings can relate themselves positively to this object and find themselves in it. "The moment of the overturning of the Oriental principle commences at this point, the moment of the changeover from nature to spirit." But this religion has not yet given universality to its principle; it is still bound to locality, to the Jewish people alone. Its thought is abstract, not yet concrete (L 332–3).¹⁵ But a new self-consciousness has emerged and a new task is posed. Before turning to Greece, we must examine Egypt "as the [first] land to which is relegated the carrying out of this task" (L 333). We note here that the connections Hegel is pursuing are not historical but typological and philosophical. There is no direct line of influence from Persian to Jewish to Egyptian and Greek religion, but rather stages in the consciousness of spirit.

Egypt

Egypt occupies an intermediary position between the Oriental and Western Worlds: it was conquered by the Persians under Cambyses, its traditions are indigenous to North Africa, and it had a powerful effect on the Greeks. It addresses but does not resolve the "task" of liberating spirit from

¹⁵ Hegel gives an extensive and more appreciative treatment of Judaism as "the religion of sublimity" in the 1824 and 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 423–54, 669–87. Shlomo Avineri notes the ambivalence of his treatment in the philosophy of world history lectures (both here and under the Roman World, L 454–5). Judaism is the first religion to grasp the true idea of God, but it is treated solely in terms of its holy books, not its actual participation in the historical process. For Hegel it has no political expression, even though Jewish states did exist during the First and Second Temple. However, Avineri points out, historical Judaism did not disappear like the Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; and, in respect to contemporary Jewish civil and political rights, Hegel advocated a liberal policy. "The Jews thus remain, for Hegel, in some way in history but not of history, a fossil—yet a living organism, a distinct community who in a way should not be there, and for whose continuing existence no adequate answer is given within the majestic schema of Hegel's philosophy of history." Avineri goes on to describe Hegel's influence on a whole generation of early nineteenth-century secularized, emancipated Jewish intellectuals in Germany, of whom Nachman Krochmal was the first. "Krochmal performs an *Aufhebung* of Hegel's views on Judaism from within the Hegelian tradition itself" by arguing that Judaism is the truly "consummate" religion. See Shlomo Avineri, "The Fossil and the Phoenix: Hegel and Krochmal on the Jewish Volksgeist," in *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 47–63, esp. 51–4, 56.

its natural and animal forms; rather everything for it remains an enigma (*Rätsel*). The symbol of the enigma, and of Egypt itself, “is the sphinx, this twofold figure, half animal and half human, and indeed female. It symbolizes the human spirit that tears itself away from the animal domain, that frees itself from the animal and casts its gaze about but has not yet completely grasped itself, is not yet free, does not yet stand on its own two feet.” Moreover, “the language of Egypt is still hieroglyphic; it is not yet the word itself, not yet script.”¹⁶ We lack a literature, and our knowledge of how they thought is dependent on ancient sources, principally Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus (L 334–6).

Their priests told Herodotus that the Egyptians were the first human beings, and indeed their civilization is very ancient, with communal life first appearing in the upper Nile valley, principally at Thebes. Later, commercial activity shifted into central Egypt (Memphis) and then the delta (Sais). Egypt’s geographical locale is the long and narrow Nile valley, which is subject to flooding twice a year. Floods are the only source of water for agriculture, and Egyptians mastered the art of irrigation. Herodotus claimed that they were the most rational of all the peoples he had observed, with their well-ordered society and monumental achievements, but that they do all things the opposite from how other peoples do them (e.g. men attend to household matters whereas women engage in external affairs and thus are not in seclusion) (L 336–43).

It would seem that this tranquil people must have a comparably tranquil religion.¹⁷ Instead we find “an ardent, active, laboring spirit . . . a people aglow and afire,” pressing toward an “objectification within itself that, however, does not attain the free self-consciousness of spirit. There is still an iron band around the eyes of spirit” (L 343–4). Egypt remains within the bounds of a nature religion for which everything is a symbol of something else. The principal symbols are the sun (Osiris) and the earth and moon (Isis). Osiris and Isis rule in a cyclical process that is related to the Nile: fertility and growth are followed by drought and desolation. Osiris is

¹⁶ Hegel was unaware that in 1821 a beginning had been made at deciphering the Rosetta Stone. He does refer to the research of Jean-François Champollion, *L’Égypte sous les Pharaons* (Paris, 1814), who studied the hieroglyphics and in 1825 reported his results. Hegel acknowledges this discovery in the lectures of 1830–1 (L30–1 193).

¹⁷ See the discussion of Egyptian religion, the “religion of the enigma,” in Hegel’s 1824 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 358–381.

buried in the earth and becomes lord of the dead before he is reborn in the next cycle (L 343–9).

Animal worship plays a principal role in Egyptian religion. The incomprehensibility of the divine appears in the soul of the animal, its vitality and intelligence, which remain impenetrable for humans. With a truly spiritual religion, the incomprehensibility vanishes, for spirit is self-understanding, self-transparency, presence to self and freedom. The mystery of the divine remains concealed in animal life, and this is why, for example, the flight of birds could serve as an oracle for the Greeks. The Egyptians worshiped Apis and other oxen as well as cats, ibises, and crocodiles. They read the signs of the dung beetle or scarab. Respect for living things is found among all ancient peoples, for whom truth is something “over there,” something beyond human spirit. At the same time, the Egyptians were resistant to this unselfconscious state and downgraded animal vitality to a symbol of something else. They accomplished this by juxtaposing animal figures, for example, a snake with the head of a bull or ram, or a lion’s body with a crocodile’s tail and a ram’s head. The juxtaposition signals the symbolic nature of the figures. More explicit are animal bodies reduced to sphinxes from which a human figure emerges. But the appropriate sensible figure of the spiritual, as the Greeks discovered, is the human figure, not a hybrid (L 349–54).

Egypt knows only the struggle of spirit to free itself from nature. The principle of this “African spirit . . . is precisely to endure such harshness and to overcome it, whereas the Indians take their own lives” (L 357). This spirit expresses itself in the great labor that produced wondrous works of art and architecture—works that we still admire after three thousand years. In higher religions, art is subordinate, but in Egypt art is the necessary means of self-representation. Its medium cannot be intellectual but rather the hardest of natural materials, stone, into which are carved hieroglyphs and sculptures, and from which are constructed the most massive structures, requiring an advanced knowledge of mechanics (L 357–9). Hegel then writes:

With other peoples, the work of their effort is subjugation or domination of other peoples. The vast and abundant realm of the Egyptians’ deeds is, in contrast, their works of art. Works of annihilation endure in memory, but we still possess the [actual] works of the Egyptians, though only in ruins. One hundred thousand men were engaged for ten years in the Trojan War, and what they accomplished, the endeavor of the Trojan War, was the devastation of Troy. The chief result is the

futility of both sides, of the besieged and the besiegers. What the Egyptians presented, and left behind them, is a far loftier achievement, a positive one that, albeit in ruins, is still something more or less indestructible and enduring. These are works of the greatest kind. (L 359)

This statement not only is a tribute to the Egyptians but also offers a rare glimpse into Hegel's attitude about the incessant warfare that has marked human civilization from the outset. The suffering and devastation of war represent a gigantic exercise in futility, which can only be described as tragic and makes of history a "slaughterhouse" (M 90). Hegel views warfare as something tragically inevitable until such time that spirit has advanced beyond this primitive mode of competition.

A novel aspect of the work of the Egyptians is their dedication to the dead and to the underworld in particular, because the souls of mummified bodies live on. Theirs is not a true belief in the immortality of the soul, which is something alien to the Oriental character. Immortality of the soul means that the inwardness represented by the soul is infinite of itself. The Egyptians did not know "that spirit has a higher, eternal purpose, and that, reflected within itself, spirit is inherently infinite." For them the dead are given a continuation by embalming, whereas with true immortality the preservation of the body is completely nonessential. The Egyptian orientation is to vitality in the present, to the particularities of life's sensual pleasures. Their energy is not yet directed to the universal, and spirit does not yet come to be *for* itself, although it is struggling toward it. "That this particularity is also explicitly ideal is what must now come forward as the joyous, free, cheerful spirit, and this is the spirit of Greece" (L 359–63, 366).

The transition to Greece is one of the most critical of the *Weltgeschichte*. Hegel quotes Herodotus to the effect that "the Egyptians are impulsive boys who lack the ideality of youths and who will become youths only by means of the ideal form"—an incorrect citation, but one that fits Hegel's stages in the maturation of spirit (L 366). Spirit must break free from the self-enclosed night of nature; the Egyptians are absorbed in this labor, but the Greeks complete it. The fruit born of the goddess at Sais is, according to the Greeks, the sun, Helios. This sun is the Greek spirit, or light, and Apollo is the god of light. At his chief temple are inscribed the words, "Human being, know thyself!" "This knowledge is what is primary, and the labor of the world, the striving of every religion, ascends to it; there is no inscription more sublime than this." The Oriental principle must

give way to self-knowledge, which in turn requires political freedom (L 367–8).

Over against Greece stood Persia. The Persian intuition of light as the principle of unity was authentic, but this unity was not interconnected organically with the elements of particularity. In Greece, an authentic integration came about through the deepening of spirit within itself, whereas Persia sank back into Asian opulence and military dominance. Greece and Persia were drawn into an inevitable conflict, one in which Greece suffered a near-death experience but ultimately triumphed (L 369–70).

The Greek World

The world spirit now moves beyond childhood to the age of youth, and it finds its home in Greece. Two youths exemplify the spirit of Greece: the first is Achilles, the poetic creation of Homer, who is the great literary source for the intuition of the Greek people; and the second is Alexander the Great, the actual youth, whose conquest of the East brought the age of youth to its end. It is the *concept* of youthfulness that is important for Hegel, its vitality and immaturity, its enthusiasm for life combined with an inability to achieve universal goals. Greece offers a concrete yet sensuous spiritual vitality, a spirituality that still has sensuous presence and that highlights the beautiful human form, the individual human being. “The Greek world has as its foundation the Oriental world; it starts out from the divinity of nature but reconstructs it, giving it spirituality as its inner soul” (L 371–2).¹⁸

The Periods of Greek History

The three periods that mark the history of the Greek people are especially clear in the case of the Greeks because they are the first to enter into the concrete nexus of world history. The periods are: the beginning; a retrospective contact with an earlier world-historical people (for the Greeks,

¹⁸ Hegel’s principal ancient sources for the Greek World are Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Herodotus’ *History*, Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War*, Diodorus of Sicily’s *Library of History*, and Pausanias’ *Guide to Ancient Greece*, as well as the works of philosophers, dramatists, and poets. See L 371 n. 2.

the Persians); and a prospective contact with a later empire (the Romans). The first period is the first formation of a people up to a condition of sufficient maturity that it can come into contact with the people that precedes it. Here a struggle occurs between indigenous and alien elements, and when they have been unified a people's distinctive vigor is marshaled. The second period is that of a people's triumph. But when this people turns too much to external relations and accomplishments, it lets internal matters slip and falls into disunity and conflict; it disintegrates into a real and an ideal existence, the latter being the realm of critical thought. So the seeds of destruction are planted precisely at the point of triumph, and the destruction is wrought partly by thought. The third period is that of decline and fall, which culminates in contact with the next world-historical people, a people called upon to construct a higher stage of the *Weltgeist*. We find these three periods replicated in the history of the Roman and Germanic peoples, but with distinctive twists in each case (L 372–3).

The geographical characteristics of Greece (its islands, rugged coastlines, interior mountains, and dependence on the sea for connection) are such as to lend themselves to the creation of a spirit of “self-subsistent individuality,” which can be unified not by a beneficent (or despotic) patriarchy but only by law and spiritual custom (L 373).

The Origins of the Spirit of the Greek People

This spirit, free and beautiful, could emerge only gradually out of the mixture of heterogeneous elements. Some of the original tribes and peoples were entirely non-Greek, and we cannot say with certainty which ones were originally Greek. The uniqueness of the Greek spirit is found in how it assimilates what is foreign: colonists arrived from Asia Minor, Phoenicia, Egypt, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean, creating the “Greek” identity out of “Hellenic” tribes. From this foreign lineage famous dynasties were established, which founded enduring centers of power in the form of cities and citadels established near or on the coastlines. These circumstances are described in the Homeric poems, which show that birth and lineage are one aspect but that a figure must establish his own authority, and that relationships were familial rather than patriarchal. The Greeks were united just once, under Agamemnon, but it was his reputation and power, not his lineage, that persuaded the chieftains

and peoples to go to war. Later the Greeks were no longer politically united, not even against the Persians (L 373–82).¹⁹

What truly united the Greeks was their *culture* by which they became a world-historical people and distinguished themselves from other peoples whom they called “barbarians.” “Each of us feels at home, and takes pleasure, in the realm of Greek culture, art, and science. . . . It is here, with Greek culture, that there begins the conscious connection of the chain of cultural tradition. We come from the Romans, who were educated by the Greeks” (L 383). Under the peaceful conditions established among the various Greek associations and communities, individuals were able to thrive in their quest for excellence. The drive to manifest joyful self-awareness progressed into fine art. “Art arises from . . . a labor that is free of need and consists in the fact that individuals make themselves into something, that they . . . exhibit . . . the character of universality” (L 386). The physical body is formed into a work of art through garments and attire; then games and dances celebrate the beauty of the human form, and songs express the individual subject (L 382–7).

At this point Hegel introduces a lengthy discussion of Greek *religion* (L 387–99).²⁰ Religion is concerned with what is *essential*, and this essentiality for the Greeks is not something exterior and natural but interior and human: it is the beautiful human shape, comprehended in its freedom. “God is for human beings their own essence. Humans conceive God to be in a positive relationship to them, as their ‘other’ to immediate contingency and finitude, as their essence and substantiality” (L 388). However, for the Greeks this essentiality is the *beautiful*, which means that it is spirit in its sensible manifestation and thus in its finitude, whereas the true essence is infinite. Beauty is the unity of sensibility with spirituality, and free beauty is what constitutes the divine for the Greeks. The principle of free *thinking* has not yet been conceptualized, and so the freedom of spirit is still associated with the human-natural form.

We confront two questions. First, why is it that the Greeks do not yet worship the absolute in spirit, why is it that spirit does not yet appear to

¹⁹ Despite what he says here, Hegel later remarks (L 405) that a second, partial unification did occur when Sparta joined Athens to defeat the Persians at Salamis and Plataea in 480–79 BC.

²⁰ Compare his treatment of Greek religion in the 1821 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 141–52, 160–89.

spirit *in the spirit*? Second, why is it that the God of the Greeks does not at the same time appear to them *in the flesh*, even though the Greeks possess divinity in human shape? The answer to the first question is that God does not appear to the Greeks in *pure thought*, as what is nonsensuous, for the Greeks are still closest to the Oriental principle. Subjectivity here is still only emergent, and spirit is not yet one with itself in thought. God cannot yet be revered in spirit, and spirit is not yet the knowing of spirit. The answer to the second question is that, while Greek religion is anthropomorphic, it is not anthropomorphic enough: it does not know God in an immediate human existence, as a *this*.²¹ It knows God in the beautiful shape of the human, as it is fashioned in marble or other media, but it cannot conceive of God as actually *becoming* human, appearing in and as the subjectivity of a single human being. Thus, against Schiller, Hegel contends that “the Christian God is much more thoroughly human” than the gods of Greece (L 388–91).

The Greek gods are not merely natural powers but are essentially spiritual individuality, which for the Greeks is what is essential and supreme. But the latter is not yet established as *free* individuality, and spirit is not yet comprehended *in the spirit*; it is not yet *subject* in addition to substance. The Greeks start with nature, but natural divinity is sublated in spiritual progress. This sublation constitutes the difference between the Titans, who were nature deities, and the Olympian gods, who overthrew them. The “resonance” of the natural powers is preserved in the new gods. Thus Apollo is the knowing god but has the resonance of being the god of light, and Poseidon is partly the resonance of the nature god Oceanus. This resonance represents the Oriental legacy in Greek consciousness. On the one hand, the Greeks took their gods from Asia and Egypt, but on the other hand their labor, their cultural work, was the transformation of this alien element (L 391–4).

The resonance echoes in the Greek *mysteries* and *oracles*. The mysteries derive from an old nature religion with the presumption that ancient and venerable sources reveal the truth of all that follows. To address particular concerns or to know what one must do in the future, one must consult the

²¹ The “this” is a theme of increasing importance as Hegel’s lectures progress, reaching its culmination in the Christian doctrine of incarnation as found in the medieval church and in the Reformation. See L 391 n. 36, 396 n. 43, 489 n. 28. The theme is lacking completely, however, in the lectures of 1830–1.

oracles. In this respect, Greek religion is still superstitious. The Christian, by contrast, “is confident that his particular destiny and welfare, temporal and eternal, is an object of God’s care. . . . The Greeks did not and could not arrive at this view; for it is only in the Christian religion that God has become a *this* and has taken the character of the *this* into the character of the divine concept.” With their trust in God’s care and providence, Christians can decide and resolve things for themselves and do not need to consult an oracle. The Greeks lack infinite subjectivity and have to rely on an exterior source (L 394–6).

Closely connected with the oracles is the Greek view of *fate*—a fate that mysteriously governs individual events and must be accepted for what it is. Hegel at this point makes important remarks regarding his own view of providence:

The category of providence, or faith, for Christians stands opposed to what we call fate for the Greeks. In other respects, however, for Christians as well as for Greeks the connection of particularities to the universal is something incomprehensible and misunderstood. Destiny unfolds on a soil that must be called contingent in respect to particular purposes; . . . but Christians have the view that all these particularities serve for the best, that God guides all these contingencies and leads them to the best outcome. Thus they assume that God’s object is what is best for them. The Greeks lacked this view just because what is particular, the end of individuals, was not taken up into God. They accepted individual events as they happened and where they found them, but they did not have the conception that what is best for them would be a final end, that as a “this” they would be an end. So they were just left with the thought . . . “That’s how it is, and humans must submit to it.” (L 398; cf. 396–9)

Thus faith in God’s providence does not eliminate the contingency that applies to particular events, and these contingencies are often incomprehensible. But Christians believe that God, having become flesh, has the well-being of each and every human being at heart, and that therefore God “guides” the contingencies to the best outcome, which means taking up the final end of each individual “into God.” I have discussed the manner of the “guidance,” noting that it assumes principally a negative form, and I observe too that the “best outcome” is not a historical utopia but a (mystical) assumption into God. History is governed by contingencies, but God, not fate, is the lord of history. Thus Christians find “solace,” whereas for Greeks there is no solace, simply a submission to what is.²²

²² Hegel’s doctrine of providence is evaluated in Ch. 5 below. See also just below, n. 24.

To conclude his discussion of the origins of Greece, Hegel turns to its *political constitution*. The Oriental World offers a brilliant display of despotism; the constitution of the Roman World is that of aristocracy, and of the Germanic, monarchy. In Greece, the constitution is democratic, which for Hegel means direct rule by the people (that is, the citizens among the people). Such rule presupposes the unity of subjective and objective will, which is possible only where infinite subjectivity or subjective freedom has not yet developed. Monarchy emerges when external order requires a “focus” for the sake of stability and subjective freedom is recognized and honored; thus in Hegel’s view monarchy is the highest form of governance. Under democracy, the will is still the objective will, the collective will of citizens, not that of individual subjects (L 399–402).

Three conditions are required for the form that democracy takes in Greece. First, citizens make decisions based on their “inner oracle.” They cast votes, and the majority decides. The greater the number of votes (and/or the closer the vote), the more the decision appears to be arbitrary, a matter of chance, and individual votes are devalued. Contingency appears on every side: one citizen stays away from the assembly for this or that reason while another speaks eloquently; issues are manipulated by interest groups; perhaps only one insignificant vote decides the matter, and the decision is resented. The second condition is slavery: freedom holds good for the Greeks only because they are these particular citizens; it does not apply to human beings as such simply because they are human. Presumably what Hegel means is that not everyone can participate in a democracy, only Greeks who are adult male citizens. This points to the third condition, which is small size. A democratic state cannot spread out very far because it is the whole body that renders the decision. Thus the citizens must be present together and the various interests must be alive for them (L 402–4). Hegel does not consider here the possibility of a *representative* democracy and a balance of power among the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive; for him these conditions apply only in the modern world in the form of a constitutional monarchy (where the monarch is a figurehead but an important symbol of unity and national identity). Today, as has been noted,²³ constitutional monarchies are considered a

²³ See above, pp. 73–4.

form of democracy, along with republics, but both differ greatly from the Greek model.

The Maturity of the Greek Spirit

The second period involves contact with the antecedent world-historical people—in the case of the Greeks, with the Persians in the events involving what Herodotus called “the War with the Medes.” Hegel notes that not all the Greeks participated in the Persian Wars. Even when the stakes were highest, “particularity” maintained the upper hand over a common Hellenism. In fact, the Greeks were (partly) united only once, when Sparta came to the aid of Athens at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC. The next year the Persian army was defeated at Plataea, ending the very real threat of Greek destruction. These battles marked a major turning point: “West and East stood so opposed here that the interests of world history lay in the balance.” Over against a mighty Oriental despotism, united under a single ruler, stood “a few peoples of limited means but possessing free individuality.” “Never in world history has the advantage and superiority of the noble power of spirituality over massed forces . . . been displayed so splendidly.” This was Greece’s finest hour, and Herodotus gave it immortality by his words (L 405–7).

As soon as the Greeks had repelled the external threat, the tension had to be turned inward. They turned to inner dissension and conflict in the form of the rivalry between Athens and Sparta. These city-states were opposites in every respect. Athens was a place of refuge for a diverse populace. Solon gave the Athenians a democratic constitution, but with an aristocratic element. Slaves could be acquired by purchase, but no free Greek peoples were ever enslaved. The Athenians achieved an enviable refinement in customs, beauty, talent, and discourse. The Spartans, by contrast, came into the Peloponnesus from Thessaly and made slaves, “helots,” of the native people. They lived in a continuous state of warfare and were constantly involved in military exercises. Sparta was an aristocracy or oligarchy run by wealthy overseers and military leaders. They forced an austere communal asceticism on their people and banned science and art (L 407–13).

Hegel concludes this section by observing that, while we always feel ourselves drawn to Greece (especially Athenian Greece), our spirit cannot find its highest satisfaction there. “The objective absolute that is beautiful lacks a principal element, namely truth; and here right and ethical life still

lack the sublime freedom that comes from the subjective unity of self-consciousness.” Another principle is on the way, and it first appears as something “revolutionary and demoralizing” (L 413).

Decline and Fall

The struggle between Athens and Sparta erupted into the Peloponnesian War, which dragged on for twenty-seven years (431–404 BC). Sparta obtained financial support from the Persians and eventually defeated Athens and the other states, transforming democracies into oligarchies and abandoning the Greek cities in Asia Minor. The Greek ideal had been fatally betrayed, and several centuries of decline ensued (L 414–15).

It was precisely at this point that Greek philosophy attained its greatest achievement, threatening the religion of beauty and the order of the state by its critical thought and principle of subjectivity. Against the notion of the Sophists that human beings as finite ends are the measure of all things, Socrates grasped *being in-and-for-itself* as the universal and *thinking* as the final end. Then the existence of the gods (though not the unitary divine itself) was questioned by Plato, who sought to ban not art but what art portrayed as the highest: *thought* of the absolute is required rather than merely sensible representation. The fate of Socrates, remarks Hegel, was the highest tragedy:²⁴ for his part he had the justification of thought; but for their part the Athenian people were right in recognizing that the Athenian state would be weakened and destroyed by the principle that justification resides in one’s own inwardness (L 415–18).

In the state, an irresolvable conflict arose between the principle of individuality (which had dark, destructive aspects as well as beneficial ones) and that of rule by the people as a whole. The Greeks needed a foreign king to impose his will on them. That king was Philip of Macedon, and his son, Alexander, inherited his father’s vast power and had a free hand to use it. This “second youth of Greece” consolidated

²⁴ This is Hegel’s only significant mention of tragedy in the lectures. However, I shall argue in Ch. 5 that he introduces a tragic dimension into history as a whole, namely, that conflict is an inevitable aspect of human existence, and that God must take this tragic conflict into the divine life in order to accomplish reconciliation; hence the theme of the “death” of God. This is Christian tragedy as distinct from Greek tragedy. In Greek tragedy, there is a conflict of opposed interests, each of which has substantial justification; but there can be no true reconciliation because of the higher power of fate, “a blind necessity that stands above all, even above the gods, uncomprehended and desolate” (*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 651).

the inner impulse of Greek life . . . turning it against the motherland of Greece, the East, the Orient. . . . In one respect, Alexander avenged the evil that had befallen Greece at the hands of the Orient; in another respect, however, he repaid a thousandfold all the good that Greece had received from the Orient in the form of early cultural impulses. . . . The great work of Alexander, his great and immortal deed, is that he made the Near East into a Greece. (L 420–1)²⁵

Historians say that, although there was nothing but bloodshed in Alexander's conquest, he was still great. However, remarks Hegel, "One must be prepared for blood and strife when one turns to world history, for they are the means by which the world spirit drives itself forward; they come from the concept" (L 421). The means are tragic and self-destructive, for conflict is implicit in the concept itself (which holds together opposed elements), and explicit in human existence; but, as we have seen, the means are used by spirit to further its own ends. Part of Alexander's personal tragedy is that, while he established a Greek world empire, he could not establish a family dynasty. He was a military genius, an interpreter of history, and a man of great personal bravery. He died at the right time, when his work was finished, leaving behind a legacy that has endured to the present day (L 421–3).

In the absence of Alexander, only an ugly, barren particularity remained, and the Greek states were torn asunder into rival factions. The biographical writings of Plutarch and Polybius tell us about the tragic individuals of this last period: good persons could only despair or withdraw from public life. In these circumstances, "a destiny appears that can only negate what has gone before; it is blind, harsh, and abstract. And the Roman Empire plays the role of this fate" (L 424–5).

The Roman World

The Roman Spirit

With the Romans "politics is destiny," which means for Hegel that individuals were not taken into account but were sacrificed; it means

²⁵ In the lectures of 1830–1, Hegel remarks that Egypt became a brilliant center of science and art under the Ptolemies, as has been discovered by deciphering the hieroglyphic inscriptions. The city founded by Alexander, Alexandria, united Greek and Oriental culture and became the principal commercial center of the ancient world for several centuries (L30–1 289).

that the achievement of the Roman Empire was *political power* for its own sake. Rome represented a prosaic, practical dominion without a spiritual dimension. "Rome broke the heart of the world, and only out of the world's heartfelt misery . . . could free spirit develop and arise" (L 424).²⁶

Rome expanded outward from a single hub (the reverse of the origins of Greece), embracing tribes of Latins, Sabines, and Etruscans. There was no family or patriarchal form at the outset but a robber band, a brotherhood of shepherds and bandits. Having no wives of their own, the Romans robbed neighboring people of their women. This genesis in "abduction" is typical for the subsequent history of Rome. The Romans lacked the instinct of natural ethical life, a lack that led to harsh familial conditions. Wives could either become legal possessions of their husbands or could be acquired without a marriage ceremony by continued use or possession for a year. The husband was the family despot, but he in turn was ruled over by the state. The greatness of Rome depended on its sacrificing everything to the political bond, to the state. By contrast with the immeasurable infinitude of the Orient and the beautiful poetic individuality of the Greeks, the Romans simply held fast to finitude, to the prose of life, the ultimate abstraction. The development of formal law was an expression of the constricted, unsentimental understanding of the Romans. It was their greatest achievement. Their art had a merely technical aspect, and religion was reduced to utility and finitude. In these respects, although Hegel does not mention it here, the Roman Empire is very similar to our own age (L 427–33).²⁷

"Religion" means "to bind" (*religio*, from *religare*), and "for the Romans there is in fact a 'being bound,' whereas for the Greeks religion is free fantasy, the freedom of beauty, and for the Christians it is the freedom of spirit." The constraint of the Romans manifests itself in superstition. Their gods serve specific utilitarian purposes: everything, from political fortune and the minting of coins to baking and drainage, is governed by a god, and gods were imported to meet specific needs. The Romans gathered all these gods into the Pantheon and destroyed their divinity by reducing

²⁶ Hegel's sources for the Roman World are mostly classical: Virgil, *Aeneid*; Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*; Cicero, *De domo sua*; Polybius, *Histories*; Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*. He also relied on Barthold Georg Niebuhr's *Römische Geschichte*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1822–32).

²⁷ Hegel makes this comparison in the 1821 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 159–62. For a detailed discussion of Roman religion and festivals, also in the lectures of 1821, see ii. 190–231.

them to finite usages. They expressed no disinterested thankfulness toward, or exaltation and invocation of, what is higher (L 433–4).

A similar, indeed gruesome utility manifested itself in their festivals and performances. These presented the Romans with the spectacle of murder—of animals tearing human beings to pieces and of men and women slaying one another. To hold their interest, the Romans needed to see actual suffering and cruelty; they created a slaughterhouse. These spectacles were an objectification of their own suffering, their veneration of finitude and death (L 435–6).

The Periods of Roman History

Here too, as with the Greeks, three periods are found: the origins of Rome (the formation of Roman power); its reference to the East (the world-dominion of Rome); and its relation to the principle that ensues (the downfall of Rome). In the second period, Christianity arrives on the scene as a religion that mediates between East and West, and Hegel devotes such attention to it as to warrant its being regarded as a separate topic. Part of the irony of his treatment is that Christianity subverts the Roman principle and requires another people, the Nordic, in which to mature. So the seeds of destruction are sown at the height of Roman power, just as they are in Greece (L 436).

The Formation of Roman Power

Here we find no beautiful mythological antecedent, as in Greece, but simply a prosaic beginning. The early kings were driven out, and the transition to “republicanism” was in reality a transition to an oligarchic aristocracy that suppressed the plebeians. Aristocracy, says Hegel, represents the worst political condition, despite the desire for “the best” to rule, because it simply offers an equilibrium between despotism and anarchy, and it produces only unhappiness and exigency. But it also produces a highly effective military machine, based on the principles of abstract solidarity and obedience to the laws of the state (L 437–42).²⁸

²⁸ In the lectures of 1830–1, the first period of Roman history is discussed in greater detail and includes materials on Rome’s founding, early Roman society, religion, family relationships, the transition from kings to the republic, the struggle between patricians and plebeians, and military expansion (L30–1 300–28). Hegel emphasizes that Roman religion was one of dependence, subjugation, superstition, and everyday utility. “How little have these prosaic representations in common with the beauty of the spiritual powers and deities of the Greeks!”

The World-Dominion of Rome

With its increasing wealth and power, Rome entered into a second period, into a world theater that lies around the Romans like a panorama, the entire perimeter of the Mediterranean Sea. With its defeat of Carthage, Rome became mistress of the Mediterranean and all the lands around it. Gradually it worked its way from this periphery more deeply into these lands until it became the mightiest empire the world had witnessed, stretching from Roman Britain to Asia Minor. Julius Caesar emerged as the consummate image of Roman purposiveness, a man who wished nothing other than to be the ruler, undeterred by ethical constraints. He suffered the fate of all such great individuals, having to trample underfoot what he lived for. After making inroads into Gaul and Germania, he turned against the republic, cleansed Rome of base interests, and established the emperor as the one person whose will dominated all. Hegel describes this principle as that of “spirit’s complete coming-out-of-itself, the utter, intentional, deliberate finitude that is without constraint.” This principle reached its consummation in Caesar Augustus, and in opposition to him, to this “great breach” in spirit, there appeared its opposite, namely infinity—an infinity that did not negate finitude but encompassed it (L 442–7).²⁹

The Arrival of Christianity

With this concept of infinity, Christianity arrived on the scene. Hegel says that his purpose is not to describe what constitutes the true religion and the true infinite, but only its *appearing*, the necessity of its appearing at this time, when “the time was fulfilled”; for history deals with the appearing of what is true, not with truth itself (L 447). Despite this caveat, Hegel first launches into precisely a discussion of the true idea, not just its appearing.

(L30–1 309). The transition from kingship to a republic was a change in name only, with two consuls assuming the same powers as one king. The struggle between patricians and plebeians was a protracted one, and only when it had been settled was Rome able to devote its full attention to military expansion.

²⁹ In the lectures of 1830–1, the preparation for the birth of Christianity is described somewhat differently (L30–1 338–45). Private individuals, excluded from power in the Empire, resigned themselves to fate, pursued sensuous enjoyments, and found serenity in a wholly abstract inwardness through the philosophies of the time (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism). The pain of the Roman world was that satisfaction could be attained only within the mind, internally, not in concrete existence. “These pains of the world were the labor pains of a different and higher spirit, one born in the Christian religion” (L30–1 343).

The absolute idea is the universal that subsists in and for itself—not, however, as an empty essence but as internally concrete and determinate within itself. It posits itself as its own finite “other” but then draws back into itself as infinite fullness; it does not lose itself in bringing itself forth as an other to itself. “God is this infinite life of separating the other from itself and being present to itself in this separated element. This relationship is the speculative form.” This form constitutes the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, and it is present in the sentiment of love, which entails loving another for the sake of the other and finding oneself in this other (L 447–8).

There are two ways to grasp this truth: the way of faith via representation; and the way of knowledge via reason. Between these two resides the understanding (*Verstand*), which holds fast to the distinction between finite and infinite and does not know how to resolve it. “Upon approaching truth, the understanding destroys what is true in it.” The truth of Christianity—the doctrines of the Trinity and of the divinity of Christ—does not appear simply at the beginning, in biblical statements literally construed, but through the living spirit of the community of faith, speculatively interpreted (L 449).

Our primary task, however, is to describe the *appearance* of the idea, the fact that the time had been fulfilled. When the categories of finite and infinite are separated, we find on the one side the absolute finitude of the Roman world, a harsh servitude, the principle of abstract personality, *this one*; we find it in the capricious form of the emperor, who is “the god of the world.” The other category is infinite freedom, the principle of abstract universality, which appears philosophically in Stoicism and religiously in the “immeasurable expanse” of the East. This expanse, says Hegel, becomes supersensible only in the God of Israel, who is stripped of sensuality and is conceived as pure thought. Here, for the first time, in the Jewish religion, the characterization of God as “the One” becomes a world-historical principle. These two, the infinite One and finite singularity or subjectivity, are the two categories of the self-consciousness of this age. “In isolation they are one-sided . . . in their truth they are posited as one. This uniting of East and West, and the assimilation of the two principles, took place in the Roman world.” The Western longing for a deeper inwardness, a profound vastness, led it to the East where it found expression in diverse forms: Syrian mystery cults, Egyptian religion, Greek

mythology, Neoplatonic philosophy (in Alexandra, learned Jews developed their intuitions by means of Western categories) (L 450–3).

This is the world into which Christianity was born, on Jewish soil, under Roman domination. For Christianity, the infinite One, the God of Israel, comes into sensible presence as *this one*, Jesus Christ. God reveals godself as a human being in human shape. In this way the longing of the world is fulfilled—its longing that the human being as finite should “be elevated and grasped as element of the divine essence,” and that God should “come forth from his abstract remoteness into appearance and into human intuition” (L 453). Faith is the intuition of the unity of God and humanity, the certainty that the divine spirit dwells within oneself, that one is in mystical unity with the divine. It entails a liberation from the natural state. But the intuited unity must also be present in a natural mode, the mode of an immediate single being, a *this one*. The unity could appear only once, in a single individual. “God is inherently only *One*, and God’s appearing must therefore be designated utterly with the predicate of *oneness* and so it excludes all multiplicity” (L 454). This appearing of God emerges within the Jewish religion, for this people prayed to God as “the One,” and it emerges under Roman domination as the antidote to the claim of Caesar to be “the one.”³⁰ Within Judaism, God is not internally concrete, cannot take on the determinateness of finitude, and remains the God of just the Jewish people.³¹ Within the Roman Empire, Christianity is able to break out of this constraint and to present itself as the true and universal religion. “Just as the divine idea has within itself this crossover to human being, the human being knows itself as infinity within itself” (L 456). Thus individuals attain an infinite inwardness, but only through the hard labor of breaking through the natural sphere, of taking up the cross, and of enduring the persecution of the state (L 453–6).

The triumph of Christianity has several consequences for life and the state. The first is that slavery is ruled out. Humans have infinite worth as

³⁰ Shlomo Avineri notes that “the Jewish state itself perished at the hands of the Roman Empire at the same time in which it offered salvation to the wretchedness of spirit imposed on humanity by the Roman yoke.” Jewish history has been sublated into Christian history, and Hegel does not mention it again except briefly in connection with the Crusades in the lectures of 1830–1. Avineri, “The Fossil and the Phoenix,” in *History and System*, 53.

³¹ Hegel remarks that the Jews attained a deeper speculative insight with the story of the creation of human beings in the image of God and their “fall” into the knowledge of good and evil. This story is unique to Judaism, but it is found only at the beginning and remains without consequences elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (L 455).

human beings, and they are destined for freedom. Its external history to the contrary notwithstanding, when Christianity is truly practiced, it can have no slavery; Christianity is the true humanity. The second consequence is that the forms of ethical life have changed. An authentic, inner spiritual subjectivity arises, which is no longer the beautiful ethical life of the Greeks, nor can it be the merely private interest and caprice of the Romans. The third consequence is the establishment of two worlds: a supersensible spiritual world of subjective inwardness and a temporal world, a determinate existence that appears in one aspect as the church, and in the other aspect as the state (L 457–8).

The final consequence concerns the political constitution that corresponds to Christianity. For reasons already adduced, the true constitution cannot be Oriental despotism; nor can it be that of Greek democracy, in which subjective will is immediately identical with the will of the state; nor can it be the sort of servitude that exists under Roman aristocracy. In the true state, obedience to the secular order must be a matter of “negotiation” with individual, subjective purposes. The state must be strong enough to accommodate these private interests within it and to satisfy them. It must be rational in itself, and inherently just. Hegel believes, as we have seen, that these conditions appear most satisfactorily in the modern principle of monarchy, of which he has an organic view, that is, a view in which legitimate competing interests of freedom combine into an organic totality. “Each element is posited as independent power and at the same time as an organ of the whole organism” (L 458–9).³²

³² The lectures of 1830–1 differ considerably at this point. While the discussion of the arrival of Christianity is similar to that found in 1822–3, Hegel adds a more general analysis of religion in which he argues that the so-called *antithesis* between reason and religion is simply a *distinction*. Reason is the essential feature of both the nature of spirit and the essence of the divine. Religion is found in the soul, the heart, whereas reason has the same content in knowing the truth and bringing truth to bear on actual life. “The connection is that in religion the heart is the temple of freedom in God, and according to reason the world or the state is a temple of freedom capable of a content that is itself the divine [content], such that freedom in the state is preserved and exemplified by religion, since ethical law in the state is but the elaboration of what constitutes the basic principle of religion. The further business of history, then, is for religion to appear as reason, for the religious principle to indwell the heart and soul of human beings and to be brought forth as worldly freedom. The history that follows [from this point onward] should transcend this cleavage between *the heart’s inwardness and existence*, should make reconciliation actual, and accordingly should make the Christian principle a reality” (L30–1 349–50). The lectures of 1830–1 add a discussion of “law and the state” and “monarchy and the state” that is mentioned only briefly in 1822–3 at this point (L30–1 351–8). Then, under the theme of “the emergence of the Christian principle,” the

The Downfall of Rome

While Christianity came into being during the era of the Roman world, it required a different people to be the bearer of its principle, namely, the “Nordic” people. The Romans were inextricably linked to their irrational, barren, and abstract principle of imperial dominion, and when they came into contact with a new world-historical people their end had arrived.

Three characteristics mark their downfall. First, internal corruption destroyed the empire from within. Second, spirit withdrew into itself as something higher: Stoicism on the one hand and Christianity on the other. Finally, the onrush of foreign peoples overwhelmed the empire in a flood that no dam could withstand. These were mass migrations of Nordic and Eastern barbarians. “Since these . . . barbarians were called “*Germanen*,” the world-historical people is now the Germanic people” (L 460).³³

The Germanic World

Introduction

Hegel uses the terms *germanisch* and *Germanen* to designate the European peoples whose ethnic and linguistic heritage is Germanic. The Germanic

lectures of 1830–1 include a synopsis of the teaching of Jesus in which the absolute demand of the gospel for inward reconciliation of the heart with God and for purity of spirit is contrasted with the realities of worldly ethical life (L_{30–1} 358–60). Thus the pure Christian principle requires “development,” and the entire ensuing history is the history of its development. First, “the friends of Christ formed a society, a community,” and they were able to arrive at the truth of his teaching only after his death under the guidance of the Spirit (L_{30–1} 361–2). But the community had to develop in the Roman world, and under its influence the theoretical element of the gospel had to be set forth as “dogma.” The church fathers and early church councils drew upon Alexandrian and Neoplatonic philosophy, which in their own way arrived at the insight that thought or the idea (as opposed to sensuous deities) is the basic content of religion. This content was Christianized by the early fathers with explicit reference to Christ as the thought (or word) of God incarnate. “The greatness of the Christian religion is that, with all this profundity, it is easily grasped by consciousness in its external aspect and, at the same time, lends itself to deeper penetration” (L_{30–1} 362–6; quotation from 366).

³³ The lectures of 1830–1 end the discussion of the Roman World differently. They focus on the decadence of the Eastern Byzantine Empire, where Christianity remained an abstraction that was distorted by imperial politics and desecrated into something abominable by the fixation on useless dogmatic distinctions and the veneration of icons. This “rotten structure” endured until it was shattered by the Turks in 1453. Whereas in the East Christianity was corrupted by the culture already in place, in the West it had to create a new culture of its own and to provide the barbarian multitudes with civilization for the first time. Thus it was forced to develop something new and authentic (L_{30–1} 367–73).

peoples comprised one of the great ethnic complexes spreading over much of ancient Europe. Germanic is one of the language families of Indo-European, but in German the terms *indogermanisch* and *indoeuropäisch* are used synonymously. The Germanic languages include not only German (*Deutsch*) but also English, Dutch, Flemish, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic. The other two European ethnic complexes identified by Hegel are the Romance peoples and the Slavs (he makes little or no mention of Celtic, Finnish, and Hungarian peoples). The term “Germanic” really becomes synonymous with “European” because in Hegel’s view the Germanic principle has pervaded all Europe. The principle ultimately has nothing to do with ethnicity or language but with the reconciliation of worldliness and spirituality, substantiality and subjectivity, state and freedom, actuality and rationality. Nonetheless, his perspective on history is not only Eurocentric but Germanocentric.³⁴

In addressing the Germanic world, we face the subjective difficulty of being unable to approach more recent history as impartially as we can the distant past, and the objective difficulty of having “both the idea as such and the particularity from which fulfillment of the absolute final end is to emerge.” The latter difficulty arises because the subjectivity of will now predominates, along with the absolute idea as such; these two are essentially different, yet their unification is the ultimate goal of world history. The particular will, in pursuing its own ends, initially resists being driven toward an absolute final end; “it effects the absolute itself by fighting against it.” The drive is at first obscure and unrecognized; “hence we are often forced to judge what has happened in just the opposite way from how it appears to be in the history of peoples.” The French say, “In repulsing truth one embraces it,” and this is what modern Europe has done by exhausting itself in bloody struggles. Its history shows “that the idea in the mode of providence ruled—providence as a veiled inner power

³⁴ The only sources specifically mentioned by Hegel are Tacitus, *Germania*; Karl Friedrich Eichhorn, *Deutsche Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte*, 4 vols. (Göttingen, 1808–23), and Johann Stephan Pütter, *Teutsche Reichsgeschichte in ihrem Hauptfaden entwickelt*, 3rd edn. (Göttingen, 1793). On the equivalence of “Germanic” and “European,” see L 183, 208 n. 79. Robert Bernasconi argues (“The Ruling Categories of the World,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, 326–7) that Tacitus claimed that the Germans were a pure, unmixed race, and that Hegel adopts this view, which seems to be an exception to his principle that the mixing of peoples is beneficial. However, if the term “Germanic” is to be taken as equivalent with “European,” then it embraces three major ethnicities: Germanic, Romance, and Slavic. These peoples certainly mixed in creating the modern European identity.

that achieves its end and prevails via the recalcitrant volition of the peoples—so that what it achieves and what the peoples desire are often at odds.” This is a principal instance of the negative rule of God in history (L 461–2).

Individual European states form, struggling and fighting against each other, yet they are also being driven toward a general unity. When the latter has been accomplished, Europe turns outward—not backward to an earlier people or forward to a new people. This is because, “with the Christian religion, the principle of the world is complete; the day of judgment has dawned for it” (L 463 incl. n. 2).³⁵ When it turns outward, Christianity encounters the world of Islam, which is for it an inessential moment (L 464 incl. n. 3). “The Christian world has circumnavigated the globe and dominates it” (L 464); any future essential revolutions will occur within it.

Following this abstract summary of how Europe “ends,” Hegel returns to its beginning. The beginning occurred with mass migrations of Romance and Germanic peoples in the fourth and fifth centuries AD. The Germans were attracted by the cultural world they eventually vanquished, but for several centuries they lagged behind the Romance nations, which directly inherited Roman culture. Further east, Slavic nations existed, and from the south came later incursions of Hungarians, the Magyars. But these peoples, of Asian origin, have not yet entered into the realm of European history (L 464–7).

The Periods of the History of the Germanic World

Using the most sweeping generalizations, Hegel distinguishes three periods (early, medieval, and modern), which represent three types of unity (real, ideal, and universal), and which are compared with earlier periods of world history (Persian, Greek, and Roman³⁶). However, the Reformation does not fall easily into this classification, and in Hegel’s actual treatment it belongs to a fourth period, which we have called “The Transition to Modernity.” Just as Christianity subverted Roman hegemony but did not yet find its “people,” so the Reformation subverts the medieval synthesis

³⁵ I return to the theme of “world judgment,” as it relates to the “justification of God” (theodicy), in Ch. 5.

³⁶ Here the Persian principle represents authoritarian rule, the Greek principle an ideality of spirit, and the Roman principle a quest for universal unity.

but is not yet fully modern. The final period of the Germanic world is not that of “decline and fall,” as with earlier empires, but that of “modernity,” which for Hegel seems to represent the consummation of world history—yet he broods over it. The comparison with Rome is unsettling (L 467–9).

The Preparation of the Early Middle Ages

Covering the period from the fall of the Roman Empire (480) to the reign of Charlemagne (800–814), the early Middle Ages³⁷ struggled with the tension between the independence of individuals and the need for social organization. Germany always had free individuals, but they came together in assemblies and gathered around commanders-in-chief and kings. Their allegiance to the king was called “fealty,” which is a principle of the modern world: “from one’s innermost mind and heart to be in association with another subject” (L 471). The two elements were united in the formation of the state—the unification of fealty with the will of individuals. However, the unification occurred only gradually, and Germany in particular was initially splintered into numerous principalities in which private privilege and particularity of mind and passion triumphed (L 469–74).

In contrast to this extreme of particularity in early Europe stood the other extreme, that of the pure thought of the One, which emerged in the Oriental world in the form of Islam in the seventh century (L 474 incl. n. 14). Here all particularities become accidental. Judaism and Christianity share with Islam its worship of the One, but in Islam this characteristic becomes fanatical because all differences and determinacies are abolished. Everything drops away: positive rights, property, possessions, particular purposes. “That is why Islam devastates, converts, and conquers all.” At the same time, the ardor and beauty of love are nowhere expressed more fully; and—though Hegel does not take note of it—tolerance of other religions is an early feature of Muslim rule over subjugated peoples. Hegel does note that the “natural father” of the Christian world is the West, but its “more sublime and spiritual father” is the East. The East is the birthplace

³⁷ Hegel’s first period in the lectures of 1830–1 starts with the Germanic peoples in the Roman world and the gradual formation of the Germanic nation (L_{30–1} 378–85). It then treats the rise of Islam, the Arabic invasions of North Africa and southern Europe, and Islamic characteristics and culture (L_{30–1} 385–9), before turning to the kingdom of the Franks and the organization of Charlemagne’s empire (L_{30–1} 390–7).

of freedom and universality, over against the Nordic reliance on individual subjectivity. Christianity could combine these elements, but Islam remained largely untouched by Western influence. It conquered all that it could: the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, and southern France. Only at Poitiers (or Tours, 732) were the Arabs halted by Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne. Great cities appeared in Asia Minor, Egypt, and Spain; scholars and schools were established, which disseminated the sciences and the works of classical antiquity, together with free poetry and free fantasy. But this magnificent empire soon disappeared. Islam did not impinge again on the history of Europe until early modernity, with the invasion of the Ottoman Turks—a presence with which Hegel was familiar in the 1820s in the form of the Greek struggle for independence (L 474–7).

The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages continued from the early 9th century to the Reformation.³⁸ Charlemagne unified the Frankish Kingdom and was named Holy

³⁸ On the divisions of the medieval period and the transitional character of the Reformation, see L 478 n. 18. The treatment of the Middle Ages is quite different in the lectures of 1830–1. It begins with three reactions to Carolingian hegemony: that of individual nations against the universal dominion of the Frankish empire, that of individuals against the legal power and authority of the state, and that of the worldly principle against the clergy (L30–1 397–414). It then addresses the theology of the medieval church. In place of the theme of the “this,” the argument in 1830–1 is that the essence of the Christian principle is that of mediation, that is, consciousness of the oneness of human and divine nature, the intuition of which has been given to human beings in Christ. The presence of Christ is represented in the Catholic Mass as an external thing, and a division comes about between those who control access to the supreme good (the clergy) and those who receive it from others (the laity). Human beings are said to be too lowly to stand in direct relation to God, so when they turn to God they need a personal intermediary. The church thus gains absolute authority over their lives (L30–1 415–22). The lectures of 1830–1 then introduce the role of the establishment of cities in nurturing humanity’s inner freedom and self-governance (L30–1 424–30), before addressing not only the Crusades but also armed conflict between Christians and Saracens in Spain, Slavic pagans in eastern and southern Europe, and heretics in the south of France (L30–1 431–7). The church consumed all its moral authority in these conflicts, and spirit was driven back into itself, evidence for which is found in the establishment of monastic and chivalric orders and the elaboration of philosophy and art (L30–1 437–42). Hegel devotes considerable attention to how states emerge from the feudal system, a system that embodied the master–slave relationship. The church opposes state power and seeks to hold the individual spirit in bondage; but new awakenings of worldliness occur in the renaissance of the humanities and the arts and the beginning of natural explorations. The compass enables ships to go out on the open seas in voyages of discovery. “These phenomena are comparable to a sunrise that, after prolonged storms, is in turn the harbinger of a beautiful day, and the *Reformation* emerges as

Roman Emperor in 800. Later the empire split up and fell apart, and the Germanic world reverted to private dependencies. Thus during the medieval period the “real” authority and unity became “ideal,” or spiritual, through the triumph of the Catholic Church. Its first great accomplishment was to make the Christian religion into an object of scholarly study by bringing rational reflection to bear on it. The basic doctrines of the church had been established by the early church fathers and the ecumenical councils. “What there is now, in addition, is the elaboration of this subject . . . by theologians of the West, who formulated it in thought; these theologians were essentially philosophers. . . . Every theology has to be philosophical; for purely historical treatment does not address the content as truth.” Theology brought dialectical thinking to bear upon faith and transformed it. The science of theology as cognition of the truth became the principal mode of scholarship, but other sciences also appeared, such as law and medicine (L 479–80).

A second aspect, however, was that of feeling, “the deepening of religion in the hearts of individuals.” The church established convents and monastic orders. Even the “firm gnarled oaken heart” of the Germanic peoples was split in two by Christianity, pierced by the power of the ideal. “It is the incredible power that breaks the stubborn self-will of barbarism and wrests the strength of that nature to the ground” (L 480). The envisaging of the ideal took the form, finally, of transforming laws in accord with the church: murder became a crime and was no longer tolerated as a form of vengeance; laws governing marriage prevented the treatment of women as property to be bought or sold, and divorce was not allowed; but celibacy and the religious life attained a higher status (L 481).

Hegel describes at some length the role of the church in medieval politics. Power struggles occurred between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, and different regions of Europe experienced different solutions. Especially in Germany a protracted struggle persisted between emperors and popes, a struggle that undermined the unity of Germany and led ultimately to the victory of the church. At the height of its power, the church asserted authority over every aspect of life and scholarship. The

the sun in its full splendor shedding light on everything” (L30–1 442–59). While the lectures of 1830–1 provide more detailed historical information, the rich speculative insight of the lectures of 1822–3 seems diminished.

real kingdom had been replaced by “the dominion of this ideal kingdom” (L 482–8).

The church seemed to possess everything, but one thing was lacking: “the presence [of God] experienced by self-consciousness.” The early church councils long ago established the objective, absolute content of Christianity. The content was not altered by Scholastic philosophy, and “philosophy in our own time too can only transpose the content into the form of the concept.” One aspect of this doctrine is that divinity is not a *quantity* of some kind but a *relationship*, the unity of the divine with the human, “such that God appeared to humanity and is utterly present to humanity.” The divine nature has within itself the quality of the *this*. “Christ has appeared, and this presence, this unity of the human and the divine . . . is what the world has ever been striving for” (L 488–9).

But where is Christ today? The God-man Jesus Christ existed as a temporal being and thus as a past being. His spiritual presence cannot be that of a prolonged physical presence such as that of a string of Dalai Lamas. What is past exists no longer, but the *this* should still be present. The divine singularity is no mere mode or accident of substance but is essential to the infinitude of God, and this singularity must be present. For medieval Catholicism, this presence is found in the Mass or the Last Supper. The Mass happens not once but eternally, for it is the life, suffering, and death of *God*. The sacrifice of the Mass is an actual presence, not merely a historical remembrance or a psychological phenomenon. It takes place perpetually in the community of faith, which is itself the co-celebrant along with the priest. The problem with the Mass, however, is that Christ is represented as something external, as the host that is consecrated by the priest. Sensible presence as such is essential to the *this*. But when it becomes the *host*, the consecrated bread and wine that is supposed to be worshiped as God, then it can be repeated endlessly, and the need for such a physical presence multiplies exponentially. Miracles and relics extend the divine presence; single details of nature are converted into particular manifestations of the divine. Christ is reproduced in countless churches, but Christ himself, as the Son of God, remains utterly one. What the church demands is this utterly one presence, on earth, here below, in his physical, if now long-decomposed, form. But access to the Holy Land and the tomb of Christ was blocked by infidels, Muslims. The Crusades became necessary (L 489–92).

The ineptitude of the Crusades (nine of them, between 1095 and 1291), together with the grandiosity of their mission, resulted in massive bloodshed and a failed objective; and the cross of Christ was converted into a sword. But when they finally reached the tomb of Christ, the crusaders discovered the ultimate meaning of the sensible *this*: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.” Following upon Christ’s sensible presence, the Holy Spirit comes upon the community, filling the *hearts* and *minds* of people, not their hands. The Crusades expelled the illusion of Christians about the meaning of the *this*; spiritual presence replaced sensible presence; and the interests of sensibility could now be directed to the world of nature (L 492–4).

Hegel concludes his treatment of the Middle Ages by examining the turn to nature and to worldly affairs. Here he discusses the appearance of industry, crafts, and trade, and new inventions such as gunpowder and the printing press. The feudal system was broken by the rise of freedom in the cities. Social classes in Europe were political in nature and did not constitute natural distinctions, as in the Orient. Ordered states were found only in Europe, together with private rights and private property. A balance of power obtained between them, as well as among states (L 494–9).

The Transition to Modernity

Hegel briefly examines art and the corruption of the church before turning to the Reformation.³⁹ Art inwardly transfigures the external *this* by spiritualizing, elevating, and breathing life into it, raising it to a figurative form that belongs to spirit. A piety that remains in a state of bondage, in a feeling of dull dependency, has no need of art and fails to recognize genuine works of art (L 500–1).

³⁹ On this transitional section, see L 500 n. 47. In the lectures of 1830–1, the Reformation is not treated as a transition but as the beginning of the third main period, which continues to the present day. The discussion of the Reformation *per se* and its theology is not as conceptually interesting as that of the lectures of 1822–3 (L_{30–1} 461–3). But more attention is devoted to developments following the Reformation, including such topics as: Protestant schism and Catholic reaction; different responses to the Reformation in Germanic, Slavic, and Romance nations; Protestant abolition of celibacy, poverty, and obedience; Catholic emphasis on spiritual torment, intrinsic evil, and witch trials (a practice also adopted by Protestants); the early modern formation of the state; foreign relations among the states; the seventeenth century wars of religion; and a new emphasis on thought and experience in the Enlightenment (L_{30–1} 464–92).

As for the corruption of the church, we are speaking of a necessary, not a contingent, aspect. This corruption resides *within* the church, in the fact that it has not truly and wholly excluded the sensible element. It resides within its piety itself, in its superstitious veneration of sensible things as absolute. The church's highest virtue now assumes a negative form: retreat, renunciation, lifelessness. By contrast, in Hegel's view, the highest virtue is found in the realm of the living, in the family. The church is supposed to save souls from corruption, but it makes this salvation into a merely external means, namely, the indulgences. Indulgences were sold to support the construction of St Peter's, the most splendid church in Christendom. Hegel reminds his hearers that the Athenians used funds from the Delian League to build the Parthenon (L 414). "Just as this was the misfortune of Athens, so too this structure, St Peter's, which Michelangelo adorned with the image of the Last Judgment, became the last judgment on this proudest and grandest structure of the church—a last judgment on the church itself in its corruption" (L 501–3).

With his description of the Reformation, Hegel reaches the narrative climax of the *Weltgeschichte*.

In Germany there emerged a simple monk who was conscious that the *this* is to be found in the deepest recesses of the heart, in the absolute ideality of inwardness. . . . Luther's simple teaching is that consciousness of the *this* in the present is nothing sensible but something actual and spiritual; it is consciousness of an actual presence, not in the sensible realm but in faith and partaking. (L 503)

Faith here does not mean a belief in something that has already taken place or is in the past; rather it is subjective certainty about the eternal, about the truth that subsists in and for itself, and it is produced and given only by the Holy Spirit. The content of this faith is not its own subjectivity but the objective truth of the church: Christ, Spirit, the Trinity, the absolute being of God. In faith the absolute being becomes the being of subjective spirit, and subjective spirit becomes free in relating to it because it is thereby relating to its very being and truth. The *ontological* participation of faith in God, the communication of spirit with spirit, of finite spirit with infinite spirit, and vice versa, is the key insight for Luther and for Hegel. This is how Christian freedom is actualized—by participating in the true content and making this content its own. Faith and freedom are not merely

forensic categories, as neo-Kantian interpreters of Luther have claimed (L 503–5).⁴⁰

As proof that we have arrived at the narrative climax, read these words:

This is the new and ultimate banner around which peoples gather, the flag of freedom, of the true spirit. . . . The ages prior to our age have faced but one labor, have had but one task, and that has been to incorporate this principle into actuality, thereby achieving for this principle the form of freedom, of universality. (L 506)

But, while the climax has been reached, the plot fully disclosed, history itself goes on and work remains to be done. Above all, the work of actualization remains: the reconciliation that has happened implicitly in religious faith must take on concrete existence in the institutions of modern life, and it must be universalized so as to encompass the world. This is a tall order, and Hegel's relative optimism about its accomplishment has become vastly more complicated in our own time. I say "relative" optimism, because Hegel's brief account of the history of modernity recognizes deep ambiguities and difficulties.

The History of Modernity

The first development of modernity⁴¹ (L 509 n. 61) requires that the "new church" (the Protestant Church) should create a worldly existence for

⁴⁰ Recent Luther scholarship confirms this interpretation. See Christine Helmer (ed.), *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); and Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen (eds.), *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). By contrast, Merold Westphal argues that Hegel's account of the Reformation is a "paean to reason" and the "principle of autonomy," not to *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*; thus he is at odds with Luther himself. See "Hegel and the Reformation," in *History and System*, 73–92, esp. 80. Interpreting Hegel as an advocate principally of "autonomy" seems to me fundamentally wrong.

⁴¹ In the lectures of 1830–1, the discussion of "more recent times" begins only in the middle of the eighteenth century with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The focus of both is on "pure free will" (*reine freie Wille*) as what is innermost and sublime, the substantial foundation of right. The French attempted to put this idea into practice in the form of a republican government where absolute freedom resulted in a reign of terror, partly because religious conviction was not taken into account. Hegel concludes with a cryptic remark: "No government is possible in keeping with this principle [of subjective will]. This conflict, this difficulty, this problem, underlies history, and history has yet to solve it" (L30–1 505; cf. 493–505). Presumably he means that the principle of subjective will must be mediated with a principle of unity and communitarian governance. England at least has a government, whereas the French have none, but the English political constitution remains based on ancient prerogatives and privileges. In Germany feudal obligations have been rescinded, and personal freedom has become basic in the framework of a constitutional monarchy. The Protestant Church has brought about the reconciliation of religion with right and does not seek a

itself. This was not a simple task, for the “old church” retained a considerable basis in power and did not surrender its hegemony easily. In fact what happened is that religious wars endured for many years, Germany was severely damaged, the Turks invaded Europe, and no true religious accommodation was ever achieved. In addition to the Catholic–Protestant (or Romance–Germanic) divide in Western Europe, there was a third large constellation, the “Slavic nature,” which persisted in its “initial solidity” despite Russia’s approach to the West. The Protestant Church did achieve a legally secure existence, but Europe was far from unified, and deep divisions persisted throughout the rest of the world (L 509–13).

The second development of modernity is that of the scientific investigation of nature, representing what Hegel calls “the formal universality of thought.” True culture now essentially becomes that of science and is aligned with the state, not the church. The church does not assume the lead in advancing either freedom or the sciences. The sciences of the understanding, claiming to honor both humanity and God, were widely accepted as valid, although the Catholic Church did not concede that science honors God. The Church is correct in the sense that the sciences could lead to materialism and atheism, for nature and its laws are now taken to be something ultimate and universal. One could indeed add that God created the world, but empirical science has no way of recognizing God. The understanding recognizes only itself in the universality of its laws (L 514–17).

The third development of modernity is that the formal universality of thought turns to the practical, to actuality. The understanding with its laws turns itself as “enlightenment” against the spiritually concrete, the religious sphere. Its principles, derived from nature, are logical consistency, identity, and coherence. It recognizes a natural sense of immortality, sympathy, and so on, but it is intrinsically antireligious. “For the very principle of religion is that the natural is precisely what is negative and needs to be sublated. . . . Religion is speculative . . . and thus is inconsistent with the abstract consistency of the understanding.” Reason (*Vernunft*) grasps distinctions within itself as a unity, whereas the understanding (*Verstand*) holds fast to an abstract identity that lacks distinctions. For it, “the finite is not infinite,” and that settles the matter (L 517–18).

religious conscience outside the bounds of secular right, or at least not wholly at odds with it (L30–1 506–8).

When thought turns to the state, however, it has a more beneficial effect. It produces insight into the universal purposes of the state, which take precedence over privileges and private rights. Wars and revolutions are now fought on constitutional grounds, not religious ones. Such wars attempt to change governments through force from below, in the interest of freedom of the will (*Freiheit des Willens*, not *Willkür*) and self-determination. “Freedom of the will is freedom of the spirit in action,” and it emerges directly from the principle of the Protestant Church.

The freedom of will that is in and for itself is the freedom of God within itself; it is the freedom of spirit, not of a particular spirit but of the universal spirit as such, in accord with its essential being. Revolutions, then, have proceeded from thought. This thought has had to do with actuality and has turned forcibly against the established order.

Such revolutions have already occurred in Protestant states, which now are at peace, but in Romance countries the revolutions have been strictly political and are not yet accompanied by a change in religion. Religion must change for there to be genuine political change (L 518–20). Hegel regards Protestantism to be ethically-religiously superior in modernity not because of its Germanic ethnicity but because the authoritarianism of the Catholic Church excludes the possibility of authentic human freedom on both an individual and a social level.

Conclusion

This is where Hegel leaves the story, in a state of irresolution and inconclusiveness—forced upon him, one might assume, by his having run out of time; but the end of the lectures in 1830–1 is no more resolute. In the conclusion he offers only brief summary remarks about the whole of history being nothing other than the actualization of spirit. What is true in thought must also be present in actuality, and vice versa. “Thus it is spirit that bears witness to spirit, and in this way it is present to itself and free. What is important to discern is that spirit can find freedom and satisfaction only in history and the present—and that what is happening and has happened does not just come from God but is God’s work” (L 521).⁴²

⁴² The equally brief conclusion in 1830–1 makes explicit what remains implicit in 1822–3, namely, that the development of the principle of spirit is the “authentic theodicy.” “The concept has completed itself in history, and this is the glory of God, God’s self-actualization and self-revelation in history” (L30–1 509).

Shapes of Freedom Today

Robert Williams points out that for Hegel modernity has a dark side, which includes the death of God, nihilism, cultural fragmentation, lack of social solidarity, and political inequality. While his critique is muted in the *Weltgeschichte*, it is brought out most clearly in the ending to the 1821 philosophy of religion lectures, where Hegel compares modern decadence with that of the Roman Empire.⁴³ When cognition is restricted to finitude, it becomes an absolute barrier to the demand for universal justice. “It is no longer a grief to our age that it knows nothing of God; rather it counts as the highest insight that this cognition is not even possible.”⁴⁴ Left to itself, finitude is confronted by the alternatives of endless yearning for the God it denies in cognition, and self-sufficient finitude and anthropocentrism. Enlightenment philosophies of reflection fail to make sense of life, or of the anguish of enduring contradiction, and thus fail to comprehend spirit, love, community, and God. The separation of love from anguish is the spiritual correlate to the extremes of wealth and poverty in political economy. Modern civil society represents the disintegration of ethical life; it affords a spectacle of extravagance and misery.⁴⁵ The figure of master and slave returns within a world where slavery has supposedly been eliminated. Modernity has not abolished tragedy but is only the most recent scene where freedom comes to tragic realization. Hegel’s “anguished reconciliation” and “disquieted bliss” make him “a critical, if not reluctant, modernist.”⁴⁶

Certainly Hegel’s disquiet explodes the myth that he is an uncritical modernist. But it is still true that he looks to modern Europe (and North America) as the site for the future actualization of freedom—indeed, not just Europe but Germanic, Protestant Europe, because of his conviction that Catholic authoritarianism excludes a commitment to subjective

⁴³ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 158–62.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* i. 87; cf. 444 n. 175.

⁴⁵ *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 185 (pp. 222–3).

⁴⁶ Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press), chs. 3, 8, 10. The expressions “anguished reconciliation” and “disquieted bliss” come from the *Aesthetics*, where Hegel says that tragic resolution is not happy or comic, but an “anguished and grievous reconciliation, a disquieted, shattered bliss in calamity” (*eine schmerzliche Versöhnung, eine unglückselige Seligkeit im Unglück*). See *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), ii. 1232.

freedom. Only in Germanic society, including Britain and Scandinavia, could the human potential be most fully realized.⁴⁷ This may appear to be nothing but prejudice, and certainly the Protestant–Catholic distinction has largely disappeared in modern secular Europe, but consider the following. A recent ranking of the International Monetary Fund’s “advanced economy” countries on issues related to human flourishing (e.g. income inequality, unemployment, level of democracy, global well-being index, life expectancy, prison population, and student performance) places these nations at the top: Australia, Canada, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland.⁴⁸ With the exception of Australia and Canada (and perhaps they are not really exceptions), these are countries that Hegel would consider Germanic, and all of them with the exception of Austria have significant Protestant populations. In this sense the old Germanic–European hegemony continues nearly two centuries after the lectures (despite the enormous upheaval of two world wars), but Hegel’s harsh critique of modernity holds true too.

W. H. Walsh points out that Hegel did not really follow J. G. Herder in recognizing the diversity of human nature and cultures, although he certainly emphasized many important differences.

The real hero of his story is after all spirit, and by this term he means something which is active in all cultures and peoples, something which has to do with humanity. The different manifestations of spirit are indeed distinct, but this is not to say that they cannot be seen as steps in a single process. Hegel was quite sure that they could be so seen, and that the process reached its culmination in modern Europe. . . . It is true that Hegel retained something of the eighteenth-century belief in a common human nature, and that he had little use for the extreme historicism, or historical relativism, which was coming into fashion in his later years under the influence of Romantic historians.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See W. H. Walsh, “Principle and Prejudice in Hegel’s Philosophy of History,” in *Hegel’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Z. A. Pelczynski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 183.

⁴⁸ Charles M. Blow, “Empire at the End of Decadence,” *The New York Times*, 19 February 2011, p. A19. The United States is at the bottom of the list, and the United Kingdom is ranked 18th out of 33. The only Asian nations included are Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, and Taiwan. All the others are European.

⁴⁹ Walsh, “Principle and Prejudice in Hegel’s Philosophy of History,” 193. Walsh notes, as I have pointed out, and as Hegel himself recognized, that the European states of his day were “ludicrously remote” from satisfying the ideal he sketched, and that universal freedom had not been attained in the nineteenth century (194–5).

This quotation nicely poses the contrast between the conviction of a genuine diversity or pluralism of human cultures and that of a common human nature. Both convictions contain elements of the truth, and one is reluctant to have to choose sharply between them. Hegel himself recognized the dilemma and attempted to articulate it through his dialectic of identity-difference-mediation. Each mediated result becomes the pole of a new antithesis in an ongoing process. Hegel found intelligibility and truth in the process itself, which is the process of spirit coming to itself (or of absolute spirit returning to itself through difference). The final emphasis and goal is on unity rather than on difference. But difference is a necessary component of unity, which is not abstract but articulated into a whole that continually mediates among all the differences that are preserved within it.

The question we face today is whether a more genuinely pluralist appreciation of diversity can be integrated into the Hegelian mediation. Is it possible to think not of a *universe* but of a *multiverse*, a *multiform* view of spirit? There *is* ultimately *one* spirit, one humanity, and one divinity, but this oneness expresses itself in a much more far-ranging diversity of forms than anything Hegel could have anticipated, indeed in forms that cannot be integrated under any single philosophical or theological perspective. As I have suggested, Hegel offers not so much a *history* of world cultures as a *typology* (and *geography*) of them; and the typology can in principle be modified and enlarged. The *shapes of freedom* emerge not simply in a linear trajectory but in a temporal-spatial concatenation. Hegel offers a magnificent early nineteenth-century version of *Weltgeschichte*; today the project would have to be undertaken very differently as a series of partial histories of spirit and its shapes.

Paul Ricœur reflects on the options in a chapter in the third volume of *Time and Narrative* entitled “Should We Renounce Hegel?” Today, he says, we are no longer certain whether the actualization of freedom is the goal of history. “Even if we do take it as our guideline, we are not certain that its historical incarnations form a *Stufenfolge* rather than just a branching development where difference constantly wins out over identity.” Perhaps we find just a “family resemblance” among struggles for freedom, but nothing more. Leaving behind Hegelianism “signifies renouncing the attempt to decipher the supreme plot.”⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, iii. 193–206, esp. 205–6.

But Ricœur grieves the loss, and in the next chapter, “Towards a Hermeneutics of Historical Consciousness,” he partially retrieves the renounced philosopher. “Another way remains,” he writes, “that of an open-ended, incomplete, imperfect mediation . . . with no *Aufhebung* into a totality where reason in history and its reality would coincide.” The ascription to Hegel of a maximal closed totality, which simply identifies reason with its historical incarnations and regards God as using human beings as unwilling puppets, cannot be defended from the texts of the *Weltgeschichte*.⁵¹ Ricœur’s judgment might have been modified had he been able to study the texts critically. Ricœur describes his own position as that of a “post-Hegelian Kantian style,” which means that Hegel’s ontological claims can have only a regulative significance—regulative in the sense of providing norms for thought and action, not a valid cognition of divinity, of the true infinite that encompasses the finite. However, his conclusions are very similar to what I would call a revised Hegelianism. Ricœur presents a complex mix of post-Kantian and post-Hegelian convictions. He continues: “I hold that every expectation must be a hope for humanity as a whole, that humanity is not one species except insofar as it has one history, and, reciprocally, that for there to be such a history, humanity as a whole must be its subject as a collective singular.” (A “collective singular” or a plural unity is just what spirit is for Hegel, not a totalizing identity.) Today a plurality of rights must be affirmed, including the right to be different. But there must also be a rule of law, which provides common reference points. Instead of abstract reason per se, Ricœur prefers to speak of communication and emancipation, of the struggle for communicative truth (a concept that is deeply Hegelian in provenance). He regards unfettered and unlimited communication as a “limit-idea” that must also become a “regulative” one, “orienting the concrete dialectic between our horizon of expectation and our space of experience.” Instead of Hegel’s “eternal present,” he prefers to speak of the “historical present,” which, on the one hand, “is, in each era, the final term of a completed history, which itself completes and ends history. On the other hand, the present is, again in every era, or at least it may become,

⁵¹ Ricœur seems in these passages to regard Hegel’s God as a legal-penal tyrant and claims that the “cunning of reason” represents a “shameful theology” (ibid. iii. 203). I respond to these views in Ch. 5 by offering a different interpretation of how God works in history, and by showing that an imperfect mediation is compatible with a Hegelian philosophy of history.

the inaugural force of a history that is yet to be made.”⁵² This is in fact very close to what Hegel says about the eternal present and the end of history.

In his “Conclusions,” Ricœur asks whether his proposed “totalization through an imperfect mediation” is “an adequate reply to the aporia of the totality of time.” He believes that there is in fact a good correlation between the “imperfect mediation of historical consciousness” and “the multiform unity of temporality.” We must not give up on “the idea of a single history and a single humanity” even if it is multiform and appears in diverse shapes of emancipatory communication.⁵³

This sort of revised Hegelianism (open-ended mediation, multiform unity, diverse shapes of freedom) provides a way to think about the world today. Freedom is not the possession of any single culture or tradition. It appears in Asian, African, and South American religiocultural traditions as well as those of Europe and North America; and these diverse shapes can mutually enrich and reinforce each other. Aspirations of freedom are found across the globe. The most recent freedom uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East have in part drawn upon the resources of nonviolence that were first nurtured by Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King Jr. in the American civil rights movement; they sprang up again in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the Balkans in the 1990s. Here is a common trajectory and a common humanity on a global scale.

Hegel’s preference for the monarchical constitution did not prevail. Instead modernity has faced a starker choice: between democracy and various forms of autocratic or authoritarian rule. Democracy has taken firm root in Europe, North America, parts of South America, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Korea, Japan, and Israel; and it has more tenuous roots elsewhere, such as in the Balkans, Turkey, and Pakistan. The great democratic experiment of the United States resolved Hegel’s question about the solidity of its federation in a bloody Civil War, and it became the dominant world power in the twentieth century, united partly by its struggle against fascism and totalitarianism. Since these external threats lessened at the end of the century, the country has become deeply polarized by ideological disagreements that challenge its future. The parallel to the inner dissension and conflict that arose in Greece following the Persian Wars is uncanny (see L 407). The states of Western Europe have put their

⁵² Ibid. iii. 207–40, esp. 207, 215–16, 225–7, 239–40.

⁵³ Ibid. iii. 241–74, esp. 256–8.

old religious and political rivalries behind them, but they have succeeded only partially in creating a European Union because of economic inequities and diverse cultural legacies.⁵⁴

The remainder of the world remains pretty much in the grip of autocratic regimes. Ancient despotism has returned with a vengeance that would have astonished Hegel. From the former republics of the Soviet Union (including Russia itself) to large parts of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, authoritarian rulers have retained their power. Attempts by the United States to impose democracy by force have largely failed, but democratic impulses from within are beginning to bubble to the surface in North Africa and the Middle East. In the meantime there are “failed states” such as Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, and North Korea, which are breeding grounds for terrorists and illustrate by its absence the critical role of the state in human society.

The future, as always, is uncertain, rendered more so today by the threat of nuclear conflict and terrorist attack, and by crises related to environment, climate, food supply, over-population, economic injustice, and poverty. The actualization of freedom remains the great goal of history, but it requires as much vigilance and hard labor in our age as in any of the past. In fact, it remains a more difficult task than Hegel could have imagined, and it will stretch his “anguished reconciliation” and “disquieted bliss” to the limit.

⁵⁴ On Hegel and the European Union, see Ulrich Thiele, *Verfassung, Volksgeist und Religion: Hegels Überlegungen zur Weltgeschichte des Staatsrecht* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2008), 122–5. Thiele says that, given the present reconciliation of German and French values, Hegel’s view of Prussian–French relations is antiquated, as well as his underlying thesis about the religious incompatibility of the two peoples. He would be skeptical about a European constitution that blurs the distinction between states, but might be open to a type of confederation in which the associated states retain most of their sovereignty. Europe is limited by its history and catastrophes, but also spurred on by them. There is, however, one fundamental condition of a European constitutional union: it must be democratic.

5

God in History: The Kingdom of Freedom

A Theological Reading of Hegel?

“Anguished reconciliation . . . disquieted bliss.” Reconciliation and bliss are terms with a theological provenance; they signal the dimension of the surchronic. “Reconciliation” does not simply mean the healing of human wounds by an enlightened politics or a beneficent social practice; for the wound is something deeper than what humanity inflicts on itself. The wound has a cosmic dimension that involves a conflict between infinite and finite, a struggle between good and evil, that can be healed only by God’s taking the wound into and upon godself. “Bliss” does not mean the sort of happiness that humans can achieve by historical projects but rather an ultimate peace, the perfection of love and freedom. The reconciliation is “anguished” and the bliss is “disquieted” because of the tragic nature of the human condition, the reality that history on its own is a slaughterhouse.

The difficulty presented by Hegel is that his way of understanding the relationship between infinite and finite, and his attempt to construct a theology that takes into account the rational critiques of orthodox theism, leave open the possibility of interpreting his philosophy as an elaborate humanism that projects qualities of infinitude and absolute spirit onto humanity itself as it comes into self-awareness. After all, in discussing Greek religion, does Hegel not say that “God is for human beings their own essence” (L 388), that “the Greeks portrayed essential being as human” (L 390)? The question is whether human beings simply *have* their own essence in their finite existence and then call it “God” in order to exalt themselves; or whether the essence (*Wesen*) of human beings is precisely what they do *not* have in their finite existence. If the latter is the

case, then it is only when human beings *negate* their finitude and regard it as “nonbeing” that they are able to pass over to the true infinite; but even this “passing over” is the return to itself of the infinite, not an achievement of the finite.

In the first section of this chapter, I shall examine evidence that supports a theological reading of Hegel. Then, in the second section, I shall summarize what Hegel says in his 1829 *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*. These lectures are important because they clarify the complex dialectics of infinite and finite that are critical to a proper appreciation of Hegel’s idea of God; and in addition there has been little discussion of them in English. The third section considers what it means for Hegel to call God “absolute spirit”: absolute spirit is the triune God that goes out from an interior nexus of relations into the world of finite existence, becomes incarnate in a single human being, a *this*, who is Christ, and returns to godself as the spirit of mutual recognition. Such a God assumes worldly anguish into godself (the tragic aspect) and converts it into bliss (the reconciliatory aspect). The fourth and fifth sections address two themes that characterize how such a God acts in history: the rule of God (“providence”) and the justification of God (“theodicy”). The final section proposes a theological metaphor to interpret the end of history: the “kingdom of freedom.”

Hegel’s *Weltgeschichte* is not a theological document, but it devotes a surprising degree of attention to religious and theological matters. Previous chapters highlight the following about religion. In his discussion of “philosophical world history,” Hegel argues that reason (and with it God) are the infinite substance and power that rule the world, and that this rule can be called divine “providence” (M 79–80, L 144–5). In explaining how freedom is actualized in the world, he describes the interweaving of human passions and divine ideals, arguing that the idea is active in a negative mode as “cunning” and in a positive mode as lure or persuasion (M 89–100). He warns that philosophy should not fail to take into account religious intuitions out of “timidity,” and he goes on to explain what the religious final end entails (eternal bliss, the honor and glory of God) (L 167–8). He says that the following aspects of religion can be demonstrated by philosophy alone: religion is the consciousness of both the being-in-and-for-itself of spirit (absolute spirit) and its unity with the individual; humans have a such a consciousness because they are infinite in cognizing but limited in willing; the essential being of God has the

qualities of both universal power and subjective personality; the divine idea is the unity of the universal and subsisting spirit.

In another form this is the mystery that the Christian religion has disclosed and revealed, namely, that God is the unity of human and divine nature. This is the genuine idea of what religion is about. The cultus is also part of religion, and the cultus is nothing other than the singular consciousness securing this unity of itself with the divine. The unity, therefore, of the divine and the human is the genuine idea of religion. (L 186; cf. 185–8)

Thus religion is essentially a *relationship*; and the religious *object*, God, is also a relationship, a quality, not a quantity or entity, not an “impregnable battlement.” God is the unity of human and divine nature. The abstract and isolated sovereignty of God has been replaced by the Christian mystery of the triune relationality of God, the mystery of the incarnation of God in a single human being, a *this*, and the presence of this mystery in the spiritual community. Hegel elaborates on these themes later in the lectures in his discussion of the Roman and Germanic worlds.

But what is to prevent this religious relationship from being converted into the statement: humanity is the unity of divine and human nature? Just such a reversal was accomplished by Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, Karl Marx, and other left-Hegelians in the nineteenth century; and such an interpretation has been embraced by recent interpreters of Hegel such as Charles Taylor, Terry Pinkard, and Robert Pippin. Hegel himself, however, insists on the objectivity of the divine nature and its irreducibility to human nature. For there to be a true *relationship*, there must be a true *distinction* as well, the distinction of objectivity and subjectivity, of infinite and finite. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel refers to the “abstract concept” of God, the concept that philosophy grasps on its own terms. This is the idea that “God is the absolute truth, the truth of all things.” The highest point at which philosophy arrives is the proof that “this universal, which is in and for itself, embracing and containing absolutely everything, is that through which alone everything is and has subsistence—that this universal is the truth. This *One* is the result of philosophy.”¹ Support for this philosophical concept comes from religious consciousness, which has the conviction that God is “the midpoint, the

¹ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. and tr. Peter C. Hodgson et al., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), i. 367.

absolutely true, that from which everything proceeds and into which everything returns, that upon which everything is dependent and apart from which nothing other than it has absolute, true independence.”² Such a God cannot be humanity writ large, because, among other reasons, the physical world (an aspect of “everything”) has no dependence on humanity.

This abstract concept of God starts by saying that “God is what is enclosed within itself (*das in sich Verschllossene*) or is in absolute unity with itself.” This does not mean, however, that God is an abstract universality outside and over against which there are independent particulars, but rather that the “development” of God has not yet stepped forth out of the universality. The universal will indeed “show itself to be something absolutely concrete, rich, and full of content,” and this development is already contained implicitly within the “absolutely full, replete universality” that is God. Strictly speaking, nothing subsists “outside” God; God is the whole, the universal, that embraces and preserves all particularity within itself.³ Hegel then goes on to explain that such a view is not “pantheism” in any crude sense that simply identifies God with everything that is. Authentic pantheism identifies God with the *essence*, the *substance*, the *universal power* that is in all things, not with things as such. Today we would call Hegel’s position “panentheism.” It may still be objectionable from the point of view of orthodox theism, but it is not to be confused with atheism or humanism. Critics of Hegel might more plausibly charge him with “acosmism” than with “atheism”—that is, with the view that the world has no actuality vis-à-vis God, not the view that God has no actuality vis-à-vis the world. But Hegel’s dialectical way of thinking avoids both acosmism and atheism. God is the whole, but God includes what is genuinely *not-God* within God. God is neither a “large entity” apart from the world nor simply the finite processes of the world. Rather God is the “true infinite,” which means that God is not a “beyond” that is limited by the finite (a “spurious infinite”) but rather overreaches the finite and preserves it within the divine whole.⁴ God overreaches finite things, but they do not overreach God; in this respect the relationship between

² Ibid. i. 368.

³ Ibid. i. 368–9. See Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 103–4.

⁴ See Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, 104–6.

infinite and finite is asymmetrical. The way in which God is in history differs from the way in which history is in God.

Some critics cannot tolerate Hegel's "neither-nor" (or "both-and") philosophy of God; they prefer an "either-or," a clear distinction between God and the world, an insistence on a transcendent God who appears in the world only paradoxically, and on the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity.⁵ Other critics flatten out the "both-and" into a philosophy of identity, the identity accomplished when human spirit comes to self-recognition and self-affirmation. All the divine predicates are converted into human predicates. This is the only sense that these critics can make of the theological language found in the *Weltgeschichte*. Another kind of identity is found in the pan-logism of theosophic interpreters of Hegel, according to whom the "reality" of nature and finite spirit is absorbed into pure ideality.

More persuasive are the views of those who recognize that dialectical readings of Hegel are possible and that at least some of these readings are compatible. Alan Patten, writing about Hegel's idea of freedom as expressed in his social philosophy, distinguishes between four readings: what he calls *conventionalist* (it is *not* possible to step outside the ethical forms embedded in existing social institutions to inquire into their standing or acceptability; all reason is limited in this way to finite entities), *metaphysical* (it *is* possible to step outside the ethical norms to give them rational warrant: these norms are necessary vehicles for the self-actualization of God), *historicist* (it is possible to provide through philosophical reflection a rational warrant for ethical norms as they *develop* through history), and *self-actualization* (rather than emphasizing God's self-actualization, or any historical narrative, this view demonstrates that existing institutions and practices promote human self-actualization). Patten argues that only the first of these readings is incompatible with any of the other three, and that the others all capture aspects of Hegel's position. "It is possible that Hegel views the existing practices and institutions of the modern social world as: (a) a necessary instrument of God's self-realization; (b) a rational response to, and resolution of, the inadequacies and insufficiencies of historically previous attempts to articulate a set of meanings and reasons; and (c) the

⁵ See Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 10, referring to Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals*, November 20, 1847.

context of full human self-actualization.”⁶ Patten proposes an integration of (a) and (b) based on (c), which he calls the “civic humanist reading.” He argues that the conventionalist reading is unsatisfactory, and that the same is true of the metaphysical and historicist readings to the extent that they are not complemented by some other view. However, at the end of his work, Patten acknowledges that Hegel’s claim for the integration of human subjectivity and modern social-ethical life does finally fall back on “a story about God’s self-realization through historical process. Human freedom and subjectivity are the correct ideals for thinking about social and political questions ultimately because God wants, or even needs, to be freely known and worshipped.”⁷ This is a rather limited argument in the sense that it relies on the divine *will* or desire and does not take into account the divine *being* as ontologically free and self-communicating. But it shows that a theological dimension is required as the ultimate justification for claims about freedom and ethical life. Going “all the way down” means not stopping until one arrives at the infinite intersubjectivity of God. Thus I prefer an integration of (b) and (c), the historicist and humanist perspectives, based on (a), the metaphysical or ontotheological perspective; and I believe such an integration is closer to Hegel’s intention, at least in the *Weltgeschichte* and the *Religionsphilosophie*. I recognize, however, that both integrations are legitimate and represent different interpretative agendas.

Another kind of integration is possible, using an aesthetic rather than an ethical or a theological paradigm. Discussing it would take us too far afield, but later I will employ the image that Hegel introduces into his aesthetics of “the inner architect (*Werkmeister*) of history.” This image provides a metaphor of “building” and “design” for understanding how God works in history and what divine providence entails.⁸

⁶ Alan Patten, *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10; see 8–11.

⁷ Ibid. 203–4. See above, pp. 70–1.

⁸ Oscar Daniel Brauer give an anti-theological interpretation of the aesthetic paradigm. He says that the latter permits Hegel to conceive the labor of human spirit as a production that becomes conscious in its works. Historical spirit is indeed the result of its own activity, but its product first appears as an alien power, as the work of destiny, or providence. The goal of the labor of spirit is knowledge of itself, and it attains this in the consciousness of its art works, in the deciphering of its own productions. In the *Aesthetics*, Hegel speaks of the world spirit as “the inner architect of history.” Brauer claims that Hegel is thinking here of the production of Egyptians in building pyramids and other monumental masterpieces (although the context for

Hegel offers a conceptual reconstruction of the theological tradition. His views cannot be measured against orthodox Christianity, which is presumed by some of his interpreters to be the only operative Christianity, or at least the only one they are familiar with. In fact Hegel was a critic of fossilized orthodoxy and of unreflective fundamentalism. In place of orthodoxy he advanced his own speculative theology, which was a form of revisionist liberal Protestantism and must be appreciated in that context, as an alternative especially to Friedrich Schleiermacher, who is generally regarded to be the “father of liberal theology.” Schleiermacher and Hegel were colleagues on the faculty of the University of Berlin, and they shared common assumptions as post-Kantian thinkers, although they moved in quite different directions in their constructive arguments. Hegel too became a father of modern liberal theology, and his influence can be felt in the thought of F. C. Baur, Isaac Dörner, A. E. Biedermann, Ernst Troeltsch, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and Eberhard Jüngel (to name but a few). Lack of familiarity with this theological trajectory, and with Hegel’s deep involvement in the theological debates of his time,⁹ has hampered recent philosophical critics of Hegel who assume that theology is simply an antiquarian or esoteric hobby.

Hegel’s “Proofs” of God

Hegel delivered sixteen lectures on proofs of the existence of God in the summer semester of 1829. These were not part of his normal series of lectures but a special project that he apparently intended for publication since the text he produced was a fully formulated manuscript. In November 1831 he signed a publishing contract for a work “On the Existence of

the quotation is epic poetry). What the work of this architect shows is that humanity has not yet become master of its own work; the latter recognition requires a transition from Oriental to Greek spirit. See Brauer, *Dialektik der Zeit: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Metaphysik der Weltgeschichte* (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1982), 160–2. Brauer fails to notice, however, that what Hegel says of the Greeks is that the higher goal is *truth*, not beauty (L 388), and that therefore Greek art must be superseded by Christian religion. Moreover, “the inner architect of history” is not humanity but “the eternal and absolute idea, which realizes itself in humanity”; yet (argues Hegel) the aesthetic medium of realization is inadequate to the task. See *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), ii. 1065. Thus the aesthetic paradigm cannot, any more than the ethical paradigm, displace the theological paradigm.

⁹ See Hegel’s introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 83–184.

God,” but he died three days later, probably of a gastrointestinal disease. The text from 1829 was not complete, containing only a lengthy introduction and the cosmological proof, but the signing of the contract indicated his intention to complete the work. Subsequently, the lecture manuscript of 1829 was appended to the *Werke* edition (1832) of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* by the editor, Philipp Marheineke, together with a fragmentary manuscript “On the Cosmological Proof,” which most likely dates from the time Hegel was completing the *Science of Logic*, as well as transcriptions of sections on the teleological and ontological proofs from the 1831 philosophy of religion lectures.¹⁰ The treatment of the proofs has not been widely discussed, but its importance to Hegel is underscored not only by its content but also by his plan to publish. In this regard it is similar to his lecture manuscript of 1830 on the philosophy of world history, written just a year later and also intended for publication. Thematic similarities relating to the concepts of God, reason, proof, and existence are found between the two works.

Hegel begins with remarks on the relationship between proof and faith. Faith, he says, is the presupposition that lies at the basis of all thought, but in free thought the presupposition becomes a comprehended result. The thought involved in the proofs does not remain outside its object but, like faith, occupies itself with it and is the proper movement of its nature. As such the proofs comprise “the elevation of the human spirit to God”—an elevation that constitutes the very essence of religion and is necessary to the very being of human beings. The portrayal of this necessity is what we call “proof.”¹¹ Religious elevation is not first accomplished by philosophical proof; rather the latter reflects on, proves, and probes what is going on in religion. However, proof as such is a purely rational activity that proceeds not from concrete experience but from abstract categories such as “contingency” and “necessity.”¹²

¹⁰ This material provides the content of *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007); see 1–4. An earlier translation by E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson was appended to their translation of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1895). The present section is condensed from my essay, “Hegel’s Proofs of the Existence of God,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 414–29. Used by permission of John Wiley & Sons.

¹¹ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 38–44.

¹² *Ibid.* 94–5.

A second point made by Hegel is that proofs of God are not merely a subjective procedure on our part but the proper movement of the object in itself—the object in this case being the elevation of the human spirit to God, which is at the same time the return of God to godself. Instead of simply “indicating” or “pointing to” something (*Weisen*), true proof entails mediation, a movement or transition (*Be-weisen*), which has the character of a syllogism. The mediation at work in the proofs of God is not merely subjective but “is equally an objective mediation of God within godself, an internal mediation of God’s own logic.” Only if the mediation is contained in the divine idea itself does it become a necessary moment, an activity on the part of the concept itself.¹³ The true proof is God’s self-proof or self-mediation. Thus it is inappropriate to make God an *object* of proof, a demonstration or result. The finite cannot be a foundation on which the being of God is demonstrated, for God is the nonderivative, the presupposition rather than the result. The elevation to God sublates or reverses itself: it negates the finite and affirms the infinite, which is not simply one aspect, one side of a polarity, but the whole.¹⁴ The whole is a nontotalizing totality because it preserves difference and finitude.

The genre of the proofs is not to be understood as *historical* (an appeal to the views of others), nor as based on *consensus* (the specious claim that all humans everywhere have believed in some sort of deity), but rather as *metaphysical* or *philosophical*. However, the metaphysics involved is not that of natural theology, which is highly abstract, but of *speculative philosophy*, which grasps God as utterly concrete, an organic unity of determinate qualities.¹⁵ God is properly conceived not as a metaphysical object, a supreme being or large entity, but as the organic whole or subject in which everything of nature and spirit subsists and is mirrored. A double mirroring occurs: *God* is the mirror, the *speculum*, as well as consciousness; and the “speculative reversal” qualifies Hegel’s entire approach to the proofs and God.

Moreover, what is proved is not, strictly speaking, God’s “existence” or “being.” “Being” (*Sein*) in Hegel’s logic designates sheer immediacy,

¹³ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 45–50; and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 408, 414–16; quotation from ii. 253. The proofs are also discussed at length in these lectures, both in relation to individual religions (1821 and 1824 lectures) and as gathered into a special section (1827 lectures).

¹⁴ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 417–19, 422–5.

¹⁵ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 69–81.

presence to self, and is the emptiest category, whereas “God” (or “absolute spirit”) is the fullest. “Existence” as *Dasein* is simply being that is “there” (*da*), determinate or finite being; while as *existentia* it refers to something that is grounded and conditioned, not essential (*essentia*).¹⁶ God’s being is in no way an immediate, limited, finite, conditioned being, but is rather essential being (*Wesen*). Thus instead of referring to God’s “existence,” it would be better to speak of “God and his being, his actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) or objectivity (*Objektivität*).”¹⁷ *Wirklichkeit* has the advantage of suggesting that what is involved is God’s *Wirksamkeit* or “activity”: God is at work in history and in human reasoning; God is pure act. “Objectivity” means that God’s actuality is not a projection of human consciousness but rather stands over against consciousness (it is a *Gegen-stand*) even as it is known by consciousness. Hegel’s use of the term *Dasein* is a concession to traditional language about the proofs; but there is a specific sense in which it *is* appropriate, in connection with the ontological proof, to refer to the *Dasein Gottes*.

Hegel introduces what he describes as a speculative theological discussion of “the self-consciousness of God and of the relationship of God’s self-knowing to God’s knowing in and through the human spirit,” or of “God’s self-knowing in humanity and humanity’s self-knowing in God.” It is God’s very nature to communicate godself to humanity. Christianity “teaches that God brought godself down to humanity, even to the form of a servant, that God revealed godself to humans; and that, consequently, far from *grudging* humanity what is . . . highest, God laid upon humans with that very revelation the highest duty that they should *know* God.” A related philosophical principle is that “it is the nature of spirit to remain fully in possession of itself while giving another a share of its possession.” The hindrance in knowing God is not on God’s part but ours, owing to caprice and false humility, an arbitrary insistence that the limits of human reason prevent knowledge of the infinite. “The more precise point is that it is not the so-called human reason with its limits that knows God, but rather the Spirit of God in humanity; . . . it is God’s self-consciousness that knows itself in the knowing of humanity.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid. 97 n. 8, 105 n. 1.

¹⁷ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 417.

¹⁸ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 64–8. What prompts this theological excursus is Hegel’s review of a book by Carl Friedrich Göschel published in 1829 (65 n. 4).

Thus the human “elevation” is generated by the divine “descent”; it is God’s self-revelation or self-communication that is at work in humanity’s knowledge of God. This is the speculative insight. Hegel returns to it toward the end of the lectures where he speaks of “the community and communion of God and humanity with each other,” which is “a communion of spirit with spirit.” “The spirit of humanity—to know God—is simply God’s Spirit itself.”¹⁹ The communion of spirit with spirit is a theological version of the speculative concept of the relations between finite and infinite. The “true infinite” according to Hegel is not opposed to the finite but overreaches and includes finitude within itself. What results is not “identity” but “organic life within God.”²⁰

Hegel notes that a multiplicity of proofs is found in history because there are “an infinite number of starting points from which it is possible and indeed necessary to pass over to God.” But the many proofs reduce to three principal forms, which derive from a two-way relationship between the finite and the infinite, or being and thought.²¹

The first proof starts out from a *contingent*, non-self-supporting being and reasons to a true, intrinsically necessary being; this is the proof *ex contingentia mundi*, or the *cosmological proof*. The second starts out from the *purposive relations* found in finite being and reasons to a wise author of this being—the *teleological proof*. The third makes the *concept of God* its starting point and reasons to the being of God—the *ontological proof*.²² The unique contribution of Hegel’s *Lectures on the Proofs* is to show the logical progression from one proof to the next. A contingent thing can exist only if it has the ground of its being in an absolutely necessary being (the cosmological proof). Necessity, in turn, finds its truth in freedom, and freedom entails purposive relations. Given the ambiguity of good and evil in the world, finite purposiveness is true only if it has its ground in universal, divine purposiveness (the teleological proof). But the latter is not simply restricted to objectivity, as it is when as end or purpose it is merely the teleological determination of things (the objective concept). Rather it is for itself, self-mediating, the unity of objectivity and subjectivity, and as such it is the living idea, including within itself the transition into reality, becoming

¹⁹ Ibid. 126.

²⁰ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 351.

²¹ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 82–7.

²² Ibid. 92.

thereby spirit (the ontological proof).²³ In this way, the cosmological proof passes into the teleological, and the teleological into the ontological; but then the ontological proof returns to the reality from which the first two proofs arise. A dialectical spiral inscribes itself between contingency/necessity, purpose/freedom, and concept/idea; and God is progressively disclosed as necessary being, wise author, and free spirit.²⁴

The last seven of the *Lectures on the Proofs* elaborate the cosmological proof, as does the manuscript on this subject written earlier. Hegel's distinctive interpretation of this proof becomes clear in his response to Kant's critique of it. Hegel identifies two defects in the proof: in its concept of God and in the argument from contingency to necessity. As to the first, the concept of absolute necessity is not sufficient to a religiously feasible idea of God. Hegel notes that the Greeks found no satisfaction in subjecting themselves to impersonal necessity, by which their most noble heroes were annihilated; and he evaluates the inadequacy of pantheistic systems that have not moved beyond the category of absolutely necessary being or essence; they grasp God only as substance, not subject and spirit. Fortunately, the other proofs bring with them "further and more concrete determinations" of God.²⁵

The defect in the argument from contingency to necessity resides in the implication found in the customary form of it: "*Because* the worldly is contingent, *therefore* an absolutely necessary being or essence exists." This form of the argument seems to make necessity into a result that follows from contingency as the ground. The critique is misleading in the sense that it is only our *knowledge* of the absolutely necessary being that is conditioned by the contingent starting point, not absolute necessity itself. But there is another aspect of the proof that is defective, namely, its positing the quality of "having being" to contingency in the minor premise: "*there is* a contingent world," "the contingent world *exists*." The distinctive quality of the finite is to have an end, to collapse, to be the sort of being that is only *possible* and that can just as well not be as be. If it has a being, the being that it has cannot be its own being but only that of an other. It is not because the contingent *is*, but rather because it is *not*, is

²³ Ibid. 98–100.

²⁴ The transition from necessity to purposiveness and freedom is described in detail in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 391–2, 401–4.

²⁵ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 107–10, 133–44.

non-being, is only self-sublating appearance, that absolute necessity *is*, and is not merely one side of a relation but the whole. In sum, the moment of the *negative* is not found in the ordinary form of the syllogism, that of the understanding (*Verstand*), whereas it is just the self-negation of the contingent that makes it a starting point (not a ground) of the elevation to the absolutely necessary. Thus in place of the false proposition of the understanding, "The being of the contingent is *only its own being* and not the being of an other," Hegel sets forth the true proposition of speculative thinking, "The being of the contingent is *not* its own being but *only* the being of *an other*, and indeed it is defined as the being of *its* other, the absolutely necessary."²⁶ Against Lessing, Kant, Schelling, and Jacobi, Hegel affirms that there is in fact a bridge or passage from finite to infinite, but it is based not on the *self-affirmation* or self-projection of the finite, but rather on its *self-negation* and the recognition that any connection with the infinite derives from the infinite, not the finite. This recognition expresses itself in worship in the form of sacrifice and sacrament, indeed in the very act of worship as "divine service" (*Gottesdienst*).

Hegel's critique of the teleological proof is essentially similar: there is no *affirmative* passing over from finite freedom, purpose, and wisdom to infinite freedom, purpose, and wisdom, but only a negation of finite teleological actions and a recognition that God's infinite purposiveness nonetheless is fulfilled in the world by its own power (e.g. as "cunning," as "lure," as "inner architect"). Making God into a postulate of practical reason, as Kant does, is unworthy of religious experience, which is properly driven not by fear of punishment and promise of reward, but by reverence, awe, and thanksgiving. Moreover, the divinity at which the teleological proof arrives is similar to what the ancients called "soul," *nous*, the organic life of the world, the life principle—not the concept of God as spirit or subject.²⁷

Through critiques of the cosmological and teleological proofs we pass over to the ontological proof, the "only genuine proof," which establishes that "being" or "existence" is included within the true concept of God, or that the finite is included within the true infinite. Hegel disposes of Kant's objection that "being" is not a predicate that adds anything to a concept (we have the concept of a hundred dollars whether they exist or not)

²⁶ Ibid. 111–17, 159–65.

²⁷ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 703–19.

by stating: "What is required . . . is not indeed to add anything to the concept . . . but to remove from it rather the shortcoming of being only subjective, of not being the idea. The concept that is only something subjective, separate from being, is a nullity."²⁸ But the identity of concept and being must be *demonstrated*, not simply assumed, as it is by Anselm. This demonstration is elaborated at length in the third part of the *Logic*, "the doctrine of the concept."²⁹ Hegel provides a brief summary in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

The concept does not only have being within itself implicitly—it is not merely that we have this insight but that the concept is also being explicitly. It sublates its subjectivity and objectifies itself. Human beings realize their purposes, i.e., what was at first only ideal is stripped of its one-sidedness and thereby made into a subsisting being. . . . When we look closely at the nature of the concept, we see that its identity with being is no longer a presupposition but a result. What happens is that the concept objectifies itself, makes itself reality and thus becomes the truth, the unity of subject and object.

The concept, like the human "I," is alive and active; its activity can be called a *drive*, and every satisfaction of a drive is a sublation of the subjective and a positing of the objective.³⁰

Christianity offers a concrete specification of this logical insight. Here the unity of concept and being is to be grasped "as an absolute process, as the living activity of God." As such God is self-differentiating and self-revealing. God is also self-incarnating. "As spirit or as love, God is this self-particularizing. God creates the world and produces his Son, posits an other to himself and in this other has himself, is identical with himself." Incarnation, claims Hegel, is the "speculative midpoint of religion." In the Christian narrative, God takes on finite, worldly existence in the form of a human being—a *this*, an individual who lives, suffers, dies, and rises into the life of the community of faith in which God is spiritually present.³¹ In this very concrete sense it is appropriate to speak of the *Dasein Gottes*.

²⁸ Ibid. iii. 352–4.

²⁹ See *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991), §§ 160–244 (pp. 236–307).

³⁰ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 438–9, iii. 356. In Hegel's scheme the concept realizes itself in and through nature as well as humanity. Thus nature's contingent achievement of being and order is itself a form of the ontological proof quite apart from Christianity.

³¹ Ibid. i. 245, 437; iii. 109–33, 211–23, 310–28, 356–7.

When the proofs are taken together as a whole, we arrive at an adequate conception of God. God is absolute necessity (power, substance), absolute wisdom (freedom, goodness, purpose), and absolute spirit (love, subjectivity). The attributes, like the proofs on which they are based, are mutually interdependent. A two-way passage occurs in the proofs: from nature through finite spirit to God, and from God into nature and finite spirit. The two passages belong to a single concept, a totality that is both foundation and result. The result of one movement becomes the foundation of the other. By its own dialectical nature each movement drives itself over to the other. Each shows itself as transient, as a transition into the other.³² In the strict sense there is no foundation but a dialectical mirroring of elements that are always in play.

This dialectical mirroring is a double mirroring—of consciousness by the object, and of the object by consciousness; or of the finite by the infinite, and of the infinite by the finite. In the fragment “On the Cosmological Proof” Hegel says that the proposition of the ontological proof is not simply, “the infinite *is*,” but “the infinite is finite.” “For the infinite, in resolving itself to become *being*, determines itself to what is *other* than itself; but the other of the infinite is just the finite.” By contrast with a “silly idealism” that maintains that if anything is thought it ceases to be, a serious idealism “contains within itself the counterstroke (*Gegenschlag*) that is the nature of the absolute unification into one of the two previously separated sides, and that is the nature of the concept itself.”³³ The “counterstroke” is the ontological transition from infinite to finite, from concept to being, that balances and incorporates the cosmo-teleological transition from finite to infinite, from being to concept. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel employs similar images of a “counterthrust” (*Gegenstoß*) or of “a stream flowing in opposite directions” to suggest the speculative reversal that lies at the heart of his thought: the rise of finite consciousness to the absolute is at the same time the return of absolute spirit to itself from its materialization and externalization in finitude.³⁴ The infinite is the ground of the whole process in the sense of being the energy or power that pulses through it, but the pulsations move

³² Ibid. iii. 174–5; and *Lectures on the Proofs*, 89–92.

³³ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 164–5.

³⁴ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 227 n. 115, 322. See also *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, § 36 addition (p. 75).

in two directions. The philosophy of world history is for Hegel a primary instance of this double pulsation.

God as Spirit, Triune and Incarnate

God is most adequately defined not as absolute necessity or absolute purpose but as absolute spirit, for spirit encompasses all the attributes of God. God might be regarded as the most sublime example of spirit, but strictly speaking God cannot be an "example"; rather God is "the *universal*, the true itself, whereof everything else is but an example" (L 151). God's appearance as triune spirit emerges in the process of history itself, and it is the clue to this process.

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, as well as in other lectures, Hegel traces the evolution of the concept of God through the history of civilization, starting with the ancient Asian world where God is represented in natural, sensuous forms (diverse divinities), or as highly abstract universal substance (Brahman, light), representations that give rise to various forms of theism, polytheism, pantheism, and dualism. In Egypt spirit struggles to free itself from nature, but the incomprehensibility of the divine still appears in the soul of the animal. The Egyptians had not yet discovered that the appropriate sensible figure of the spiritual is the human figure, not an animal or a hybrid. This discovery is reserved for the Greeks, but God does not yet appear to the Greeks in the spirit because God is not yet pure thought. Nor does God appear to the Greeks in the flesh because they do not yet know God in an immediate human existence, a *this*. The recognition of God as pure thought is the great achievement of the Jews. Theirs is the first truly spiritual religion, but they have not yet given universality to their principle, and they have not grasped the intrinsic relationality of the divine life or its concrecence in a *this*.

Such an insight is attained by Christianity with its doctrine of the Trinity.

In the Christian religion God is first spoken of as "Father": the power, the abstract universal, which is still veiled. In the second place, God, as object, is what cleaves or ruptures itself, posits an other to itself. This second element is called the "Son." It is defined in such a way, however, that in this other to godself God is just as immediately God's own self, envisioning and knowing godself only in the other; and this self-possessing, self-knowing, unity-possessing, being-present-to-self-in-

the-other, is the "Spirit." This means that the whole is the Spirit; neither the one nor the other alone is the Spirit. And God is defined as spirit; God is for the first time the true, the complete. Expressed in the form of feeling or sensibility, God is eternal love, the Son, knowing godself in the other, having the other as its own. This characteristic is, in the form of thought, constitutive of spirit. This Trinity makes the Christian religion to be the revealed and only true religion. (L 151)

Hegel goes on to say that if Christianity lacked the Trinity, thought might find more truth in other religions, and that the Trinity is the "speculative element" in Christianity because philosophy finds and recognizes the idea of reason in it: reason entails the same process of identity-difference-mediation as that enacted in the triune life of God. This remark indicates that the Trinity is "true" not because of an authoritative divine revelation but because it is rational, and that rationality can find truth in other religions as well. In a pluralistic context, we should add that the Trinity is but one of several possible interpretative schemas, and that other religions offer their own deep insights. (Buddhist, Hindu, and Jewish insights are especially helpful from a Christian perspective.) The one truth appears in a multiplicity of forms; it is pluriform, not uniform.

The trinitarian persons are not literal persons but figures of relations, and all the relations are consummated in the figure of the Spirit, which is a philosophical as well as a theological concept. The three "persons" constitute one divine *Persönlichkeit*, which is absolute spirit; but Hegel also employs the figurative language of theology. The "Father" represents the abstract universal (the immanent Trinity); the "Son," the concreteness of God in a *this* (Christ); and the "Spirit," the indwelling of God in the community of faith. The three persons together comprise God as an inclusive Trinity, as one who loves in freedom.³⁵

The Christian insight first appeared in the Jewish community at the time of the world-dominion of the Roman Empire. It arose from the life, teaching, and death of Jesus of Nazareth, and from the interpretation of

³⁵ For Hegel's full elaboration of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, see *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. iii (esp. the lectures of 1824 and 1827). See also *Hegel and Christian Theology*, chs. 6–9. On the role of the Trinity in the philosophy of world history, see Robert Bernasconi, "'The Ruling Categories of the World': The Trinity in Hegel's Philosophy of History and the Rise and Fall of Peoples," in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Houlgate and Baur, 315–31. Bernasconi treats the Trinity not so much as a doctrine about God but as an organizing principle of world history.

these events by the authors of the Gospels, the profound theology of the Apostle Paul, and the imaginative intuition of the early Greek and Latin fathers. The *true* God is internally concrete and determinate within godself. "God is this infinite life of separating the other from itself and being present to itself in this separated element." This "speculative form" constitutes the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and of the divinity of Christ (L 447–9). The truth *appears* at a time when the finite "one" (the Roman emperor) is opposed to the infinite One. The infinite One comes into sensible presence as *this* one, Jesus Christ. God reveals godself "as human being in human shape." Here the longing of the world is fulfilled: that human being as finite should be "elevated and grasped as element of the divine essence," and that God should "come forth from his abstract remoteness into appearance and into human intuition. This intuition is what constitutes the reconciliation of human beings with God and of God with human beings" (L 453, cf. 450–6). This new religion rules out despotism and slavery, transforms ethical life, establishes a spiritual world (the church), requires an "organic" form of governance, and takes root in the Nordic/Germanic world because it is incompatible with the estrangement and brutality of the Roman world (L 457–60).

Christianity appears on the scene again in Hegel's *Weltgeschichte* with his account of the quest for the presence of God in the medieval church. Through the failure of the Crusades, Christians discovered the true meaning of "presence" to be spiritual, not sensible (not restricted to the tomb or replicated in the physical elements of the Mass) (L 488–94). This discovery was deepened and consummated in the Protestant Reformation. The consciousness of the *this* in the present is of something actual and spiritual, the consciousness of an actual presence in faith and partaking (communion). Faith is not a forensic quality but an ontological participation in God, the communication of spirit with spirit. Christian freedom is actualized by participating in the true content and making this content its own. Here the narrative climax of world history is attained (L 503–6). But the work of actualization goes on and is not accomplished in the modern era, which introduces new ambiguities and fissures (L 509–20). The tragedy of separation, estrangement, evil, and death is sublated (*aufgehoben*) in the divine life, but it continues to play out in the real world.

In what sense is Hegel's God a tragic God? Robert Williams addresses this question.³⁶ He criticizes the attempt by Iwan Iljin and Cyril O'Regan³⁷ to read Hegel's theology as a theogony, according to which God comes to be out of a primordial chaos or an abysmal condition; with such a theogony, evil acquires a positive ontological status and is intrinsic to the godhead. In struggling to overcome evil, God is struggling against an aspect of God's own nature. Against such an interpretation of the birth of God, Williams argues for a theology of the death of God: God empties godself in utter identification with God's other, mortal finitude, even to the point of death. The world is not a conflict-free harmony, nor should it worship a moral god of accusation, nor does it suffer the cold indifference of blind fate or mechanical necessity. Hegel's God is not demonic and does not have to overcome an obstacle to *become* loving, but *is* self-sacrificing love itself. This is the Hegelian theology of the cross. In the immanent Trinity—a non-temporal “theogenesis”—there is opposition and difference, which are intrinsic to life and movement, but no actual rupture or separation, and thus no evil.³⁸ With “anthropogenesis,” however, there is a necessary rupture or separation from nature and a withdrawal into self, a coming to be for-self that is the condition of both evil and good.³⁹ The self-externality of nature has to be overcome as spirit gathers and liberates itself. Under such conditions, evil is not merely possible but inevitable. There is no abyss, chaos, or evil in God that remains hidden and undermines God's self-disclosure.⁴⁰ Hegel thus rejects the tragic theology of the unknown demonic divine, which is attributed to him by O'Regan and Paul Ricœur. God is self-communicating goodness and reconciling love.

³⁶ Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press), chs. 7, 8, 10. The next few paragraphs summarize Williams's interpretation, often in his own words. I have chosen to do this because he offers a fresh perspective on material principally from the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that I have discussed at length in *Hegel and Christian Theology*. Some aspects of Williams's analysis are found in “Love, Recognition, Spirit: Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Houlgate and Baur, 387–413.

³⁷ Iwan Iljin, *Die Philosophie Hegels als kontemplative Gotteslehre* (Berne: Francke, 1946); Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).

³⁸ *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 759; *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 189–98, 275–90.

³⁹ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 205–6.

⁴⁰ *Lectures on the Proofs*, 68.

Hegel is aware, unlike most of his contemporaries, that modern conceptions of the human are tragic. Finitude, according to Williams's interpretation of Hegel, is tragic in that it is inherently contradictory; as negatively self-related, it is unstable and prone to self-disintegration. Since the conditions necessary for its existence and determinacy are at the same time conditions of its demise, finitude is metaphysically tragic, but without undermining human freedom and responsibility.⁴¹ Hegel criticizes the theological tradition's rejection of tragedy, which is based on pre-modern anthropology and the scheme of salvation history. For Hegel, the consciousness of freedom begins with a separation, a withdrawal into self that is the condition of both good and evil. Freedom becomes actual through struggles for recognition that can go terribly wrong; but freedom ultimately assumes an intersubjectively social shape of recognition and reconciliation. The consciousness of freedom expresses both a need for reconciliation and an incapacity to achieve it on its own. Hegel criticizes the modern liberal view that humanity is good "by nature," and that existence in community with others is an artificial evil. Spirit is immersed in nature (the realm of self-externality or heteronomy) in which it is not yet what it is supposed to be. A long struggle for liberation ensues. By interpreting the proposition that humanity is evil "by nature," Hegel rejects the classical doctrine of the "fall" as well as the modern optimism that humanity is good by nature, the modern self-sufficient individualism that regards community as artificial; with this rejection the moral vision of the world collapses. Instead Hegel opts for a tragic vision. Evil is connected with human existence, with the consciousness of freedom that involves a rupture, a withdrawal into self. The anthropological-ontological structures that evil presupposes are: antithesis, separation, disunion, opposition to the external world, and will or desire. Yet none of these are evil as such; they are conditions that make evil possible. Evil is not simply these, yet it makes use of them and modifies them. Evil involves singularization, cutting oneself off from the world, from others, from rational will and law. But this is what one must do to be a self and not a stone. Evil is inseparable from the self-consciousness of freedom and autonomy.⁴² But this is not the whole story, for estrangement and evil are countered by reconciliation.

⁴¹ *Science of Logic*, 128.

⁴² *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 198–211, 295–310.

The death of God, Williams continues, not only reflects and incorporates the tragic tradition but is also a crucial part of the meaning of reconciliation. The Enlightenment tries to separate love from anguish and call it “enjoyment” or “happiness,” but divine love includes the anguish of suffering, self-divestment, and death. These themes are at the heart of Hegel’s christology.⁴³ The expression “death of God” originates in the unhappy consciousness of the Roman Empire and the modern Enlightenment, and carries with it a sense of the loss of everything substantial. Christian theology appropriates and transforms this expression into the christological claim that there is negativity and suffering within God. God is not a lifeless solitary but freely chooses relations and suffers out of love and compassion. God is influenced by the world just as the world is influenced by God. Compassionate self-sacrificing love that goes to the point of death for its other constitutes the fundamental speculative intuition of Hegel’s thought. Hegel rejects competing visions of the God–world relation: the monarchical metaphor, classical divine comedy, the moral God and moral world; but he does not adopt the classical tragic theology either. His theology is Christ-centered and Spirit-centered, which means that God suffers, dies, and is raised from the dead; God suffers not because God is finite, or wicked, or has to overcome abysmal elements, but because God is free love and cannot remain indifferent to God’s other, the world. His christology and pneumatology are trinitarian: God *remains* God in total otherness, negation, self-divestment, suffering, and death. The death of God is only the beginning of reconciliation. It is also the death of death, which involves a tremendous reversal, captured by the symbol of “resurrection,” the rising of the community of the Spirit in which Christ’s presence becomes actual in faith and practice.⁴⁴ God’s triune mode of being is in itself reconciliation and thus the objective ontological foundation of divine–human and intra-human reconciliation.⁴⁵

The Rule of God: Providence

With these elaborations of Hegel’s concept of God behind us, we should be ready to address his claims about the “rule” of God or divine

⁴³ Ibid. iii. 211–22, 310–28.

⁴⁴ Ibid. iii. 223–32, 326–33.

⁴⁵ Ibid. iii. 271–90.

“providence.” However, a reluctance or wariness is often experienced when confronting this topic. In light of what has transpired and continues to transpire in history, how can anyone claim that God “rules” or “governs” history? What are the evident effects of this governance? Should the word “providence” be construed in its literal sense of “fore-seeing” (*providere*, German *Vor-sehung*) or in a more metaphorical sense? A contracted form of *providentia* is *prudentia* (prudence), which means an exercise of sound judgment or wisdom especially in practical matters, thus not so much a “fore-seeing” as a “seeing for” or “caring for.” Thomas Aquinas understood providence to be an aspect of God’s prudence, and thus he stressed divine preservation and wisdom more than he did that of fore-knowledge. The same is true of Hegel.

A review of what Hegel says about providence in the *Weltgeschichte* highlights the following. In the manuscript of 1830, he writes that it is an *applied* form of the conviction that reason rules the world—“namely the form of the religious truth that the world is not given over to chance and external, contingent causes, but is *ruled by providence*. . . . Divine *providence* is the wisdom that has the infinite power to actualize its purposes, that is, the absolute, rational, final purpose of the world” (M 83). Hegel says that we must not be content with the belief that the so-called providential plan is hidden from our eyes and that it is presumptuous to want to know it; or with the belief that this plan applies only in selected individual cases. Instead of this “petty commerce,” we must be serious about our faith in providence, recognizing that “concrete events, the *ways* of providence, are its means, its appearances in history.” However, in history the events governed by God’s providential wisdom do not concern individuals *per se* but peoples, totalities, states (M 84).⁴⁶ World history moves on a higher plane than that to which individual morality belongs. “Whatever is required and accomplished by the final end of spirit (an end that subsists in and for itself), and whatever providence does, transcends the duties, liability, and expectation that attach to individuality” (M 121).

⁴⁶ The variant to this passage in the lectures of 1830–1 says that with infinite wisdom divine providence brings about in the world its actual final purposes. However most people believe that the specific plan of providence is hidden from sight, and they stick with generalities. Pious souls see the finger of God only in isolated events when they are in distress. But in world history we are dealing with the wholes that are states, and we recognize providence in the whole (L30–1 5–8).

Hegel addresses the same theme in the introduction to the lectures of 1822–3. If we do not bring with us the conviction that there is reason in world history, then we must at least bring that of faith—

the faith that there is an actual causality in history, and that intelligence and spirit are not given over to chance. . . . It is often enough conceded that the spiritual world is not abandoned by God, that a divine will and final purpose rule in history. God governs the world. As soon as we come to more specific matters, however, we refrain from inquiring about the providential plan. . . . Can this plan be comprehended? (L 145)

God's providence and nature are said to be inscrutable and inexhaustible. But the Christian religion claims that God's nature and essence have been revealed and thus the one obligation is to *know* God. Christians are "initiated into the mysteries of God." "Because the essential being of God is revealed through the Christian religion, the key to world history is also given to us: world history is the unfolding of God's nature in one particular element" (L 145). The key to world history is the "mystery" of God as it "unfolds" through the actualization of freedom in history—an actualization in social shapes that transcend yet include individual freedom. The goal for individuals *per se* is simply the "eternal peace" that comes from sharing in the divine life, from giving God the honor and glory.

Hegel returns to the theme of providence on two later occasions in the lectures of 1822–3. In discussing the Greek oracles, he says:

The Christian is confident that his particular destiny and welfare, temporal and eternal, is an object of God's care (*Sorge*). His life journey turns out for the best. In his particular circumstances and with his particular aims, in these matters, in prayer to God, the Christian is God's object and aim, and is absolutely justified. *This* person, each and every person, should be redeemed and eternally blessed. The Greeks did not and could not arrive at this view; for it is only in the Christian religion that God has become a *this* and has taken the character of the *this* into the character of the divine concept. (L 396)

Here the reference is to God's care (*Sorge*), and the emphasis falls precisely on the individual because God as incarnate in Christ (the *this*) has infinite care for each and every individual. "The familiar trust of Christians in God resides in the fact that God has experienced the feelings of human suffering and therefore particular concerns stand under the care of God" (L 396–7). Therefore Christians can decide and resolve things for themselves rather than having to rely on an oracle or submit to fate. "In the *this* Christians

recognize the divine nature, and they trust in God that God might shape the circumstances of the *this* to the purpose of God's providence (*Vorsorge*)" (L 397).

This trust in God's *Vorsorge* stands opposed to what we call fate for the Greeks.

In other respects, however, for Christians as well as for Greeks the connection of particularities to the universal is something incomprehensible and misunderstood. Destiny unfolds on a soil that must be called contingent in respect to particular purposes; for it is a question of particularities that are not justified vis-à-vis what exists in and for itself and on its own. The particularities of circumstances, the life-story of the individual, are incomprehensible for Greeks and Christians; but Christians have the view that all these particularities serve for the best, that God guides all these contingences and leads them to the best outcome. Thus they assume that God's object is what is best for them. The Greeks lacked this view just because what is particular, the end of individuals, was not taken up into God. (L 398)

Thus faith in God's providential care accepts that the particular circumstances of history are contingent, and even incomprehensible, as they relate to individuals; but it also believes that God "guides" these contingencies and leads them to the best outcome. So Hegel's concept of providence does have an individual as well as a world-historical component; and it does not deny the fact of contingency in the world or the aspect of incomprehensibility and mystery in God's rule. Admittedly, some tension remains among his various statements, a tension that reflects his own irresolution, perhaps, or his failure to resolve conceptually all the aspects of providence.

The final reference to providence is found in the context of Hegel's remark that European history seems to arrive at its final end only by rejecting the truth, and that therefore "we are often forced to judge what has happened in just the opposite way from how it appears to be in the history of peoples." Then he says: "This history shows very clearly that the idea in the mode of providence ruled—providence as a veiled inner power (*eingehülltes Inneres*) that achieves its end and prevails via the recalcitrant volition of the peoples—so that what it achieves and what the peoples desire are often at odds" (L 462). Here the emphasis has returned to the "higher" as opposed to the personal plane; but note that the role of providence is a *negative* one, and that mystery remains because what is

involved is “a veiled inner power,” not a direct divine causality. Metaphors are used such as wisdom, guidance, care.

In fact, Hegel’s discussion of providence is highly metaphorical because he recognizes that mystery veils the way that God governs the world, and that the unveiling accomplished by revelation (*re-velatio*) does not remove the veil. That God governs the world is assured by Christian faith and Hegel’s own conception of God as absolute, world-encompassing spirit; but *how* the governance occurs, what its *means* and *effects* are—these are difficult to describe in purely conceptual language. Recall what Hegel says about the “cunning of reason.” My interpretation of this metaphor is that reason, because it is *spiritual* and not physical or natural power, must work *negatively*; it overcomes opposition and evil not directly, not by intervention in natural processes or by supernatural means, but indirectly, by letting evil combat evil, letting passions wear themselves out. Reason in its cunning subverts human intentions, has the power of apparent weakness (not of physical force or violence), and brings good out of evil. I have gone so far as to suggest that the power of cunning is like the power of the cross, where God in human shape dies at the hands of human violence but where God’s purpose prevails nonetheless. The Romans thought they were ridding themselves of a troublesome Jew by crucifying him, but instead a new religion was being born: the cunning of God. The cross represents the great reversal, the counterthrust of the idea. This interpretation seems more plausible in light of comments made earlier in this chapter about the centrality of the crucifixion and the death of God to Hegel’s theology. “God has experienced the feelings of human suffering” (L 396). There is a sense in which God “lets go,” and by letting go, by suffering, reverses the power of evil. But how this happens, how suffering has the power of reversal, remains a mystery.⁴⁷ I acknowledge that this interpretation could be viewed as a modification of what Hegel actually says about cunning, but if so it is congruent with other aspects of his thought and with a post-Hegelian sensibility about God in history.

The reference to providence as a “veiled inner power” calls to mind the metaphor found in Hegel’s *Aesthetics* of “the inner architect of history, the

⁴⁷ Interpreted in this way, the cunning of reason should not be subject to Paul Ricœur’s objection that it represents a “shameful theology.” *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), iii. 203.

eternal and absolute idea, which realizes itself in humanity.”⁴⁸ The image associated with “architect” or “master builder” (*Werkmeister*) is one of design, construction, building. But this is an *inner* architect whose work is not on the surface of events but behind and within them. The inner constructive work of God points to the *positive* role of the idea in history, which no longer appears as a counterthrust but as a *lure* in the form of morality, ethical life, and religion. Here the idea functions as an *ideal* that attracts and appeals to us; it has the power of persuasion, not of coercion. This is an attraction that draws us into the future, but it is an attraction also exercised in the past by the heroes of history, who inspire us even as they sacrifice their lives to their missions.

In sum, the providence of God, like the triune being of God, is a mystery that is expressed metaphorically by terms such as wisdom, guidance, care, cunning, persuasion, building. Hegel’s reference to the Greek oracles provides the context for interpreting “mystery”: it describes the attitude that should be assumed when one is being initiated into a *mysterion*, namely, that one should keep one’s eyes and mouth closed (*myein*). One is “mute” in the presence of mystery. An extraordinary sort of knowledge is being conveyed by the cultic ritual and oracles, the sort that cannot be seen or talked about but that requires a very intense sort of listening. A mystery contains a higher rationality, a higher truth, which cannot be described in ordinary subject–object terms and can be referred to only indirectly. For the Neoplatonists, after the time of the mystery cults, *mysterion* came to mean “speculative philosophy,” which deals with such higher truths; the same is true of the “mystical theology” of the Neoplatonic theologians.⁴⁹ The silence of mystery must come to speech, and when it does it assumes the language of metaphor as well as of speculation (and the language of *Vernunft*, not of *Verstand*). The mystery is not dissolved: what is communicated is precisely its mysteriousness, its inexhaustible, inconceivable rationality. *Vernunft* enriches and intensifies language, often to the metaphorical breaking point. It multiplies images and explores diverse rhetorical strategies to reach its goal. Instead of a reduction to the barren abstractions of the understanding, reason engenders a linguistic profusion.

⁴⁸ *Aesthetics*, ii. 1065.

⁴⁹ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 382, iii. 280.

As an example of a metaphor stretched to the breaking point, consider the following: "Reason is the rose in the cross of the present."⁵⁰ Reason, like a rose (a fragrant fragile love), enables persons to endure the contradictions of history, to grasp them rationally, and to struggle toward their resolution rather than fleeing or denying them. It demands of them hard labor because they must inquire about God and God's providential care in this unfinished, fragmentary, ambiguous, cruciform present known as history, not in a transcendent suprahistorical beyond, whether paradisiacal or eschatological.

The Justification of God: Theodicy

A topic even more fraught with difficulties than providence is the closely related issue of theodicy. A key passage occurs in the manuscript of 1830, in the context of Hegel's claim that God has revealed godself in the Christian religion, has enabled humanity to know what God is, so that God is no longer something hidden and concealed.

Our cognition consists in gaining insight into the fact that what is purposed by eternal wisdom comes about not only in the realm of nature but also in the world of actual [human events] and deeds. In this respect our consideration [of history] is a *theodicy*, a justification of God, something Leibniz attempted metaphysically in still abstract and indeterminate categories. It should enable us to comprehend all the evils of the world, including moral evil; the thinking spirit is [thereby] reconciled with the negative; and it is in world history that the total mass of concrete evils is set before our eyes. Indeed, there is no arena in which such a reconciling knowledge is more urgently needed than in world history, and we shall accordingly take a moment [to consider it]. Such a reconciliation can be attained only through knowledge of the affirmative [element in history] in which the negative passes away into something that is subordinate and overcome. It is attained in part through the awareness of what this final purpose of the world truly is, and in

⁵⁰ See *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Preface, 22: "To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present and thereby to delight in the present—this rational insight is the *reconciliation* with actuality which philosophy grants to those who have received the inner call *to comprehend*, to preserve their subjective freedom in the realm of the substantial, and at the same time to stand with their subjective freedom not in a particular and contingent situation, but in what has being in and for itself." The metaphor is also found in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ii. 248 n. 45. It was suggested to Hegel by Luther's coat of arms (a black cross in the midst of a heart surrounded by white roses) and by the Rosicrucians, a seventeenth-century secret society that used a St Andrew's cross and four roses.

part through the awareness that this purpose is actualized in the world and that evil has not been able to maintain a position of equality alongside it. (M 85–6)

Important to recognize here are the following: the justification of God must be grasped in concrete and determinate categories (as opposed to the abstract theodicy of Leibniz); the monstrous actuality of evil is right before our eyes; justification (*Rechtfertigung*) has to do not with judgment (*Gericht*) per se but *reconciliation* (*Versöhnung*); and by means of reconciliation the negative element in history “passes away into something that is subordinate” but does not disappear; it continues to exist as the subordinated aspect of the affirmative.

In the introduction to the lectures of 1822–3, Hegel argues that history must have an “end” that is not simply a progression into infinity. “The concept resolves everything, and it does so continually.” In light of this resolution, “the tribunal of history (*das Gericht der Geschichte*) would be over and done with; for judgment is passed only on what does not accord with the concept. In this return of thought into itself, eternal peace would be established” (L 166). This passage recalls a famous one in the *Philosophy of Right* where Hegel, quoting Friedrich Schiller, refers to world history as world judgment (*die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*) and says that judgment is accomplished when the universal spirit of the world produces itself in its unbounded freedom and exercises its right, which is the highest right of all, through the dialectic of finite spirits.⁵¹

This idea is elaborated more fully in Hegel’s first version of the philosophy of right:

World history is this divine tragedy, where spirit rises up above pity, ethical life, and everything that in other spheres is sacred to it. . . . World spirit is unsparing and pitiless. Even the finest, highest principle of a people is, as the principle of a particular people, a restricted principle, left behind by the advancing spirit of the age. Nothing profounder can be said than Schiller’s words, “World history is a court of world judgment.” No people ever suffered wrong; what it suffered, it had merited. The court of world judgment is not to be viewed as the mere might of spirit.⁵²

⁵¹ *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 340 (p. 371). Hegel is quoting from the penultimate stanza of Schiller’s poem “Resignation” (1786), but his meaning is different from Schiller’s, as noted below.

⁵² *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right, 1817–18*, ed. Staff of the Hegel Archives with an introduction by Otto Pöggeler, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995), § 164 (pp. 306–7).

This passage seems harsh just because of the tragic view that underlies it. In these early lectures it is clear that the rational is not simply what *is* actual but what should *become* actual, that freedom should *come into being*. The emphasis is on a dynamic, unfinished process, and there is no legitimizing of whatever exists as rational.⁵³ Tragedy marks the gap between the rational and the actual. Thus world spirit must be unsparing and pitiless. But this does not mean that its judgment (its enactment of right) is retributive, or that it exercises “mere might” (physical force) as opposed to spiritual power, which, like the power of the cross, is reconciliatory. Hegel’s statement that no people ever suffered wrong would have to be modified in light of what happened to the Jews in the Holocaust, and to other ethnic groups just because of their ethnicity, their “otherness”; but the suffering of peoples as a consequence of their aggression and hubris (intentional and acquiescent) must be viewed as merited. Hegel’s view of the decadence and decline of every world-historical people means that each people must accept responsibility for its suffering, as symptomatic not of punishment but of its own self-subversion. The tragic reading of history means that a people’s strengths can also become its weakness and downfall.

Hegel returns to the theme of judgment in his discussion of the Germanic World where he claims that Christianity is inwardly consummate and has intrinsically overcome everything outside it.

But now, with the Christian religion, the principle of the world is complete; the day of judgment has dawned for it. The church does indeed point to the beyond; it is in part a preparation for the future. But eternity is a future only for private concerns, for individuals as particular. The church, however, also has the Spirit of God present within it; it says to sinners, “Your sins are forgiven you,” and they live happily on earth as in heaven. So individuals have enjoyment, satisfaction. (L 463–4)

Later, with reference to the building of St Peter’s Church in Rome, which Michelangelo adorned with the image of the Last Judgment, Hegel says that this church “became the last judgment on this proudest and grandest structure of the church—a last judgment on the church itself in its corruption” (L 503).

The image of theodicy makes a final appearance at the very end of the lectures of 1830–1. In 1822–3, Hegel ends his lectures by saying: “What is important to discern is that spirit can find freedom and satisfaction only in

⁵³ Ibid. § 122 (p. 221 incl. n. 53).

history and the present—and that what is happening and has happened does not just come from God but is God's work" (L 521). In 1830–1, these words become: "The development of the principle of spirit is the authentic theodicy. The concept has completed itself in history, and this is the glory of God, God's self-actualization and self-revelation in history" (L₃₀₋₁ 509).⁵⁴

How shall we interpret these passages? The concepts of theodicy, justification, judgment, and reconciliation are linked, but in what way? Eberhard Jüngel offers an interpretation related to the concept of the cunning of reason. He remarks that judgment in German (*Ge-richt*) means that right (*Recht*) has been carried out. World judgment involves a divine judgment, and with this judgment the world has reached its finality. Jewish and Christian traditions generally look toward a day of judgment as a future event that will bring world history to a close. But Schiller and Hegel fundamentally altered the traditional discourse about world judgment: it occurs not at the end of time but always in time; it is accomplished in the practices of freedom as they appear in world history. For Schiller, this realized eschatology means resigning or surrendering oneself to God, giving up one's life for the sake of God, not for the sake of a reward. Hegel shifts the emphasis from individuals to peoples, to states; and he shifts the mood from resignation to actualization. A state is the highest power on earth; there is no higher court above states but only mutual agreement and recognition (or conflict) among states. Hegel is critical of the Kantian idea of eternal peace attained through a league of states. For Hegel the higher magistrate is not a league of states but the *Weltgeist*, which brings itself forth out of the dialectic of finitude that

⁵⁴ "Die Entwicklung des Prinzips des Geistes ist die wahrhafte Theodice; der Begriff hat sich in der Geschichte vollbracht und diese ist die Ehre Gottes, denn Gott hat sich in ihr verwirklicht und geoffenbart." The *Werke* edition of 1840 ends with a composite text, which reads as follows: "That the history of the world, with all the changing scenes that its annals present, is this process of development and the actualization of spirit—this is the true *theodicy*, the justification of God in history. Only *this* insight can reconcile spirit with the history of the world—namely, that what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only not without God (*sine Deo*), but is essentially God's work." Translation modified from *The Philosophy of History*, trans. John Sibree (1857) (New York: Dover, 1956), 457. Perhaps it is this ending of Hegel's *Weltgeschichte* that Ernst Troeltsch had in mind when he wrote in his *Social Teaching* that "historical accidents" such as the medieval and Calvinist systems are accidents only in the sense "that here there is no immanent development, not that these things have happened *sine Deo*." *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), ii. 916.

appears in the history of peoples and their folk spirits (*Volksgeister*). The world spirit exercises its own right (*Recht*), and it does so *ex opera operatio*, so to speak, simply in the course of history. The world spirit is not a superior world power but the power of God, who *is* spirit and free. God's freedom is actualized in the striving of world spirit in world history. The world spirit, by its "cunning," uses concrete situations, often working against their intended ends, moving through them but remaining above them. Then Jüngel writes:

In making what one will of Hegel's *cunning of reason* (a not very humanly-reassuring expression), one ought not, in any event, to overlook the fact that Hegel does not rationalize away "the total mass of concrete evils" in world history. Quite the contrary, he takes it so seriously that it calls for *reconciliation*, indeed, reconciliation on the part of the self-divesting God. . . . This reconciliation takes place in the course of history itself. "Indeed, there is no arena in which such a reconciling knowledge is more urgently needed than in world history." And where such reconciling knowledge takes place is the point at which world-historical "consideration" becomes "a theodicy, a justification (*Rechtfertigung*) of God." For the judgment of the world (*Weltgericht*), which takes place in world history conceived as theodicy, it means that this is not a *judgment* for the purpose of *retribution* (*Vergeltung*) but instead a *judgment* in the service of *reconciliation* (*Versöhnung*). God justifies godself not by *exercising retribution* but instead by *reconciling*.⁵⁵

Jüngel does offer criticisms of Hegel's realized eschatology, which are considered in the final section of this chapter, but his clarification about the meaning of God's judgment as that of reconciliation rather than retribution is extremely helpful. The retributive God presupposes a penal view of redemption as involving the paying of a price to release sinful humanity from the burden of its debt. The price is paid by the sacrifice of an innocent victim, Christ, in place of the guilty party, humanity. Hegel rejects the whole apparatus of substitutionary atonement and the juridical-penal paradigm that accompanies it, the system of reward and punishment. Although such a view is still extremely popular among Christians, from Hegel's point of view it is a fundamental distortion of the truth revealed about God in Christ, namely that God is anguished love,

⁵⁵ Eberhard Jüngel, "'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht' aus theologischer Perspektive," in Rüdiger Bubner and Walter Mesch (eds.), *Die Weltgeschichte—das Weltgericht? Stuttgarter Hegel Kongreß 1999* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), 14–25, quotation from 25. Jüngel's statement is referenced above in Ch. 2 but repeated here because of its importance. His quotations of Hegel are from M 85–6 (pp. 167–8 above).

redemptive freedom, superabundant forgiveness. Reconciliation is intrinsic to the very being of God, who is an inner nexus of reconciling relations and who sends forth reconciliation into the world of finite spirits (the *missio* of the Holy Spirit). This is not simply a reconciliation with the negative, but an overcoming of the alienation between God and humanity and among human beings. The presence of reconciliation does not destroy the power of evil, but it subordinates its “logic” in the sense of nullifying the estrangement and conflict that drive it. Evil is overcome in principle but not in fact. The evidence for this overcoming is to be found in the progress of the consciousness of freedom, in the multiplying shapes of freedom. Thus what is happening in history constitutes a theodicy, a justification of God. This is a bold proposition—one that is perhaps too bold because it seems to minimize the ambiguity and messiness of history, the mass genocides and terrible personal tragedies that occur in it, the widespread economy of reward and punishment that operates in the everyday world. Christians resolve the tension by transferring redemption out of world history into “salvation history” and by postponing the consummation to a final day of judgment. But Hegel rejects this solution. There is only one history, world history, and consummation occurs every day when individuals find eternal peace, when God is given the honor and glory, when the struggle for freedom advances by a tiny step (even a step forward from a previous step backward⁵⁶), and when there is a single act of unrequited love. The crucified God is present with us, suffering in our defeats and rejoicing in our triumphs. God is the energy that keeps us going, the energy of love-in-freedom and freedom-in-love. After the devastating conflicts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Hegel’s boldness needs to be tempered by a clearer recognition of the ambiguity and tragic complexity of history.

History is often governed by the law of retribution. Osama bin Laden was tracked down by American commandos and shot to death on May 2, 2011. It was said that by this act justice had been served, but it was the justice of retribution, not of reconciliation. Reconciliation could not have been accomplished either had he been captured alive and brought to trial. This was an instance in history when reconciliation was not humanly possible; as such it reflects the tragedy of the human condition and stands

⁵⁶ The march of freedom occurs, in the footwork of a South African hymn, as two steps forward, one step backward. “We Are Marching in the Light of God (*Siyahamba*),” 1984.

under the judgment of the words of Jesus about not seeking an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Robert Williams in his chapter on Hegel's theodicy⁵⁷ asks what kind of theodicy might be possible when the "moral vision" of the world, in which good is rewarded and evil is punished (the worldview of Job's tormenters and Kant's imperatives), is superseded by a profounder vision. Hegel agrees with Schiller that the judgment of history is not a transcendent eschatological event but is carried out immanently in every moment of historical process; but history remains tragic, a slaughterhouse; reconciliation is not a conflict-free harmony but, as Hegel says, a "disquieted bliss." Christianity is not serene like Greek religion but eternally produces opposition and overcomes it. God opens godself to finitude, including suffering and death, but God remains God, and a reversal occurs, the death of death. Hegel provides a renewal of Christian doctrine by retrieving its most ancient theme, the theology of the cross, which was obscured by traditional theology and metaphysics.

For Hegel, as we have seen, judgment is immanent in each moment of history and is exercised principally on states and historical epochs, not individuals. Judgment, says Williams, is metaphorical because there is no praetor to judge the nations. International disputes are settled by negotiation or, if that fails, by war. History is often like a slaughterhouse, but where *reconciling cognition* is possible, it may and can become a theodicy. The slaughterhouse metaphor points to a tragic dimension of existence, freedom, and history.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, reconciliation is discernible in history—not a reconciliation that eliminates the negative but a reconciliation *with* the negative. It is *cognition* that reconciles by discerning the affirmative element on which evil is parasitic, and by attaining consciousness of what the final purpose of the world is, namely, freedom. But in history freedom is ambiguous and tragic because evil has its seat in the separation of being-for-self that is a necessary aspect of self-consciousness. God is justified by a judgment in the service of reconciliation, not retribution. Theodicy is not a law of historical progress but an event of

⁵⁷ Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, ch. 12; also "Love, Recognition, Spirit: Hegel's Philosophy of Religion," in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Houlgate and Baur, 387–413. I summarize his argument in the following paragraphs because it introduces themes I have not discussed specifically.

⁵⁸ At this point Williams quotes the passage from *Natural Right and Political Science* cited above (see n. 52).

cognitive discernment: not a reconciliation *from* tragic history or a resignation *to* tragedy, but reconciliation *in spite of and in the midst of tragedy*.

Reconciliation is not merely cognitive; it also takes on a practical aspect in cultic and ethical life. Worshipers daily offer up their finite interests to God. The spirit dwelling in the community of faith dies and rises daily, which points to the eternal divine history as the foundation and correlate of reconciliation; the objective theological criterion of history is the death of God and the resurrection of God. In this process, anguish and love are eternally bound together. Humanity's vocation is to attain ethico-religious freedom, but its desires drive it to a destructive peak, a self-absolutizing. Reconciliation presupposes negation and employs negation against negation, opens the way to an affirmative relation with the other, a being-at-home-with-self-in-other. Justice, ethical life, freedom, and love are all linked. While history is not the soil in which happiness grows, the world is less grim because reconciliation does occur. If the infinite worth of each individual is to become actual in the world, universal freedom and justice are necessary. So the abolition of slavery is a judgment in the service of reconciliation, a theodicy moment; but the struggle for justice continues.

The death of God is an infinite grief against which traditional theodicy arguments and instrumental interpretations of evil are useless. The "speculative Good Friday"⁵⁹ means that the death of God must be taken up into the concept of God itself. On the one hand, this death is dysteleological and tragic; on the other hand, it is a negation of negation and the most radical, daring example of Hegel's speculative teleological holism. Old monarchical conceptions of God must be set aside and replaced by a social-communal metaphor, the true infinite. History remains ambiguous: sometimes it is a slaughterhouse, sometimes a scene of freedom. Following an insight of process philosophy, Williams says that contradictions are not overcome finally in history but in God, and he believes that this interpretation is consistent with Hegel's cunning of reason, which carries with it an eschatological proviso. God's causality is a *final* causality, which implies that God's power is not sheer coercion but persuasive, consolatory, and creative. Creativity means that the realization of the final end transforms, surpasses, and supersedes the antecedent conditions. Forgiveness is another form of creativity because it lets go of the past and allows new possibilities

⁵⁹ *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1977), 191.

to come into being. The remedy for tragic conflict is God's love that endures the anguish of death; God's love has resources and cunning that are greater than destruction; it is capable of devising new unions ad infinitum.

In the "Fragment on Love" Hegel writes:

Love is stronger than fear. It . . . cancels separation. . . . It is a mutual giving and taking. . . . The lover who takes is not thereby made richer than the other; he is enriched indeed, but only so much as the other is. So too the giver does not make himself poorer; by giving to the other he has at the same time and to the same extent enhanced his own treasure (compare Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*: [II. i. 175–7: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, My love as deep;] The more I give to thee, The more I have"). This wealth of life love acquires in the exchange of every thought, every variety of inner experience, for it seeks out differences and devises unifications ad infinitum.⁶⁰

The End of History: The Kingdom of Freedom

The key passage for our final section is Hegel's discussion of "the end of history" in the introduction to the lectures of 1822–3 (L 166–8). The end of history cannot simply be an endless succession of stages but must assume "a determinate shape and portray itself in a determinate way." "If only new principles constantly emerged, world history would have no purpose leading to a goal. . . . However, religion and reason recognize as of interest only what is genuinely true, subsisting in and for itself, only what has no limitation and is not merely transient" (L 166–7). What is the determinate shape of this final end? It is often said that it is "the good," but the good as such is indeterminate. If we turn to religion (as we must), it is said that "human beings should attain eternal peace, that they should be sanctified." This is indeed, in one aspect, the proper religious aim as it concerns the individual; the end is that in which souls find their salvation. But this goal seems to be future and otherworldly, something "over there," whereas we have an interest in what is going on here and now in daily activity. The world may still be the place of preparation for and attainment of an otherworldly end, but in this case it takes on the character of *means*.

⁶⁰ *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox and Richard Kroner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 306–7. This passage is quoted by Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, ch. 10.

However, this cannot be the case. "What constitutes the way to the goal is no mere means but directly the absolute thing-that-history-is-about itself (*die absolute Sache selbst*), the absolute history in which individuals are only single moments" (L 167).

What is the absolute *Sache* of history? In religious terms, it is simply "the glorification and honor of God (*die Verherrlichung Gottes und seiner Ehre*)."⁶¹ God is the end of history, and God is present in history as an "absolute history" of which individuals are single moments.

Spirit's absolute is the absolute of everything, the divine being. Spirit's purpose, its absolute drive, is thus to gain a consciousness of this being such that it is known as the one and only actual and true being through which everything happens and proceeds—to know that everything must be arranged, and is actually arranged, in accord with it, and therefore that it is the power that guided and guides the course of world history, the power that rules and has ruled it. The recognition of this in these deeds and works is what religion rightly expresses by giving God the honor and glory, or by glorifying and exalting the truth. . . . The individual spirit has its glory in glorifying God. This is not its particular honor; rather its honor comes from knowing that its self-feeling is the substantial consciousness of God, that its action is to the honor and glory of God, of the absolute. In this knowledge the individual spirit has attained its truth and freedom; here it has to do with the pure concept, with the absolute; here it is at home not with another but with itself, with its essence, not with something contingent but rather in absolute freedom. This, accordingly, would be the final end of world history. . . . Here too natural death is no longer at hand, and the eternal circuit is completed. (L 168)⁶¹

The "recognition" that constitutes giving God the honor and glory is something that happens not in some suprahistorical future but in each and every moment that it actually occurs. The end happens in the midst of history whenever "absolute history" fills real history. The recognition assumes not simply religious and cognitive forms but also social and ethical forms. The latter are in some respects more important because they constitute the work of building the kingdom of God—a work that remains ever unfinished in history and is completed only in God. There is a progressive dimension to the work, but the progress is fragmentary and ambiguous. So an eschatological tension remains despite Hegel's emphasis on present realization.

⁶¹ This passage is quoted in Ch. 2 but is repeated here because of its importance to the question of a theological end as well as a historical end.

The image of the kingdom of God (*das Reich Gottes*) is not found in the *Weltgeschichte*, but it is very much present in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where Hegel refers to three kingdoms—of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The kingdom of God is not the kingdom of the Father, which is a symbol of the immanent Trinity, but rather the kingdom of the Son (the *basileia* proclaimed by Jesus) and especially the kingdom of the Spirit (*das Reich des Geistes*). The kingdom of the Spirit is not simply a *Reich*, a realm or rule, but a *Gemeinde*, a community, and Hegel stresses the communal aspect repeatedly. Systems of domination traditionally associated with kingship are overcome. God is present in and as the community of the Spirit; God's rule is community-constituting.⁶² The kingdom is a tensile metaphor: it is coming into being as it is announced, but it offers a vision of what the world might become. It is "already and not-yet." Its not-yet character does not point to a chronologically future end-event but rather to the unfinished and always-proceeding nature of history; at least this is Hegel's interpretation, and his is a credible version of the biblical image.

In the *Philosophy of Right* the kingdom metaphor is extended to social and ethical life. There Hegel speaks of "the kingdom of actualized freedom (*das Reich der verwirklichten Freiheit*), the world of spirit produced from within itself as a second nature."⁶³ The "first nature" is the creation of human beings from the dust of earth; the "second nature" is the creation of the world of spirit, which is a social world, a world whose destiny is to become a realm of actualized freedom. The second nature is produced from within spirit itself because the nature of spirit is just to be intersubjective, a community of mutual recognition. This second nature is also the kingdom of the Spirit, which is present not just in faith and worship but in ethical life. This connection is explicit in the philosophy of religion. What is needed, says Hegel, is that "out of the womb of the church there be formed a free life, a civil and political life, stemming from eternal principles, a rational, worldly kingdom in accord with the idea of freedom and the absolute character of rights."⁶⁴ He describes the process of secularization by which the principle of the church also becomes the principle of

⁶² *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 133, 142, 152, 362. See *Hegel and Christian Theology*, 182.

⁶³ *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 4 (p. 35).

⁶⁴ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 151–2.

the world and is institutionalized in civic and political structures. But the kingdom of freedom retains a religious and theological provenance because ultimately it is God who is at work in history.

Ernst Troeltsch ends his magisterial work on *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* with words that surely are both reminiscent and corrective of Hegel:

As little as any other power in this world will [Christians] create the kingdom of God upon earth as a completed social ethical organism. . . . Every idea is still faced by brutal facts, and all upward movement is checked and hindered by interior and exterior difficulties. Nowhere does there exist an absolute Christian ethic, which only awaits discovery; all that we can do is to learn to control the world-situation in its successive phases, just as the earlier Christian ethic did in its own way. There is also no absolute ethical transformation of material nature or of human nature; all that does exist is a constant wrestling with the problems that they raise. . . . Only doctrinaire idealists or religious fanatics can fail to recognize these facts. Faith is the source of energy in the struggle of life, but life still remains a battle that is continually renewed upon ever-new fronts. For every threatening abyss that is closed, another yawning gulf appears. The truth is—and this is the conclusion of the whole matter—the kingdom of God is within us. But we must let our light shine before men in confident and untiring labor that they may see our good works and praise our Father in heaven. The final ends of all humanity are hidden within God's hands.⁶⁵

Troeltsch is one of a handful of theologians who have attained a deep grasp of Hegel's *Weltgeschichte*. Troeltsch wrote these words just before the First World War. It is hard to imagine that Hegel himself would not have written similar words after the devastation of not one but two world wars.

Hegel's emphasis on secularization and historically oriented eschatology has been criticized by more recent theologians. Even Eberhard Jüngel, who is so helpful in recognizing that God's judgment entails reconciliation rather than retribution, believes that this judgment presupposes the end of all history and is thus a *last judgment* (with "last" construed in a chronological rather than a teleological sense?). From a Christian perspective we cannot say that world judgment is completed *as* world history; rather it is a matter of a judgment *directing or orienting* world history. Jüngel says that the problem with Hegel is that God's personal responsibility is displaced by world process. Without a final *divine* judgment over against it, world history would indeed be world judgment. The proud assertion of the

⁶⁵ Translation modified from Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, ii. 1013.

nineteenth century that world history is progress in the consciousness of freedom can scarcely be repeated after the horrors and holocausts of the twentieth century. The final judgment (or “day” of judgment) brings *to light* what is happening in the world. There is no more stringent a judgment on lived life than that effected by the light of the Gospel. Friedrich Hölderlin saw more clearly than Hegel that world history as such is dark and ambiguous. In his final paragraphs, Jüngel seems to return to the image of a transcendent, eschatological world judge who liberates human beings from the burden of having to be their own judge and from their failure to recognize the human desire to be like God. Sin and guilt must be *revealed* by the Judge of the World; otherwise there remains the everlasting pressure of guilt and punishment.⁶⁶

In a similar vein, Wolfhart Pannenberg says that Christian eschatology must be in the tense of “present perfect”: time is already fulfilled, but not yet completed; and the completion cannot occur through world history. Hegel’s *Verwirklichung* (actualization) of Christian freedom is in fact a *Verweltlichung* (a secularization). Freedom in God lives from “an anticipation of a perfection” (a *Vorgriff* of a *Vollendung*) that still awaits the faithful. Otherwise the present will be overemphasized, and the incomplete reality of the present will shatter on the perfection demanded of it. A genuine eschaton cannot be conceptually assimilated by reason. But if it is rational to hope for completion in the future, then Hegel’s thesis of a worldly actualization of the freedom of humanity grounded in God would not suffer the fate of a critical unmasking on the one side or the quest for a forcible establishment on the other side.⁶⁷

I appreciate these criticisms and recognize that many people will agree with them, especially fellow Christians. But I remind these fellow Christians that Hegel offers an extraordinary resource for a theological understanding of how God actually does work in history. I remind non-Christians that theology *is* an essential dimension of his thought, a dimension that is difficult to ignore. I have argued that Hegel’s theology is credible and useful, but I know that I have only stirred up debates about these issues.

⁶⁶ Jüngel, “‘Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht’ aus theologischer Perspektive” in *Die Weltgeschichte—das Weltgericht?*, 25–33.

⁶⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Präsentische Eschatologie in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie” in *Die Weltgeschichte—das Weltgericht?*, 312–22.

Of Pannenberg I ask two questions: What is wrong with the secularization of Christian freedom? Without secularization freedom would remain a purely religious concept, and no transformation would occur in the everyday world. Second, what kind of future is envisioned? Is it to be a specific chronological consummation in which the ills of the world are resolved and judgment is brought on good and evil by the supernatural return of Christ? Such an expectation seems to me to be an illusion because the world is more likely to end not with an eschatological but a nuclear bang, or hopefully failing that, with a whimper⁶⁸—the gradual demise of human life on this earth as environmental conditions become unbearable in the next ice age, or through global warming, or by the strike of a meteor or disappearance into a black hole (the latter two perhaps counting more as a bang than a whimper). What might come next in cosmic history is unknowable, but the end of humanity as we know it would not be the end of God.

Jüngel's criticism is more nuanced than Pannenberg's, but he too retains a kind of salvation history over against world history. He seems to lapse back into a penal-judicial paradigm with his image of an eschatological world judge. Much of what he says as a corrective to Hegel is actually similar to Hegel's own view of the ambiguity and tragedy of history, but Hegel's view in this regard needs to be strengthened in the direction indicated by Jüngel (world judgment directing and orienting world history rather than simply being completed as world history). For Hegel too history must be a process that continues into the future with no historical utopia at the end, and the actualization of freedom must remain a task always to be accomplished. The work of God is precisely *in* history, in this secular world, and our responsibility is for this present moment in which we are, remarkably, agents of the absolute. God exercises responsibility through our responsibility. The absolute is not a static self-contained quantity but an all-embracing relationality, an infinite intersubjectivity, a project of anguished love-in-freedom that becomes incarnate in a *this*—a project in which every human being has a role as a particular *this*, emboldened by knowing that God has experienced particular human suffering (cf. L 396–7).

⁶⁸ See T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men," *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), 59.

Hegel's true limitation, in my view, was his inability to extend the resources upon which he drew to a multicultural and religiously plural perspective. Such could not be accomplished in the early nineteenth century, and it is very difficult still today. Shapes of freedom emerge in diverse cultures and religions, and these can enlarge the Jewish-Christian paradigm. Examples have been seen recently in Buddhist, Shinto, Hindu, and Muslim cultures. But stark contradictions and differences will also emerge, within cultures and religions as well as between them. Fundamentalist versions of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) confront each other with hostility and ignorance, and these versions pose an ongoing hindrance to global conversation. World history has become an immensely more complicated project but an all the more urgent one. Engagement with it is a task worthy of a new generation of thinkers who are able to transcend differences and seek a fragile, pluriform unity. Dare we imagine that such a unity might coalesce around shapes of freedom?

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